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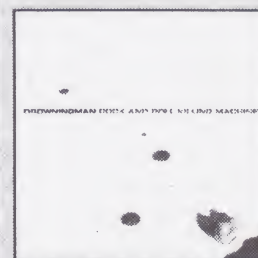


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# Table of Contents

## Departments

Letters...	7
Photo Gallery #1...	18
The Buzz on the Bizz...	20
Hardwired...	21
Top Tens...	23
Photo Gallery #2...	134
Sampler Listing...	136
Video Reviews...	137
Zine Reviews...	138
Record Reviews...	140

## Non-musical Discourse

Unsatisfied...	10
Diary of a Madman...	14
Destroying the Evil Empire...	42
International Man of Mastery...	64
LOI Undercover...	80
Mullets Galore...	102
The Story...	119
A Different Dose...	132

## Musical Mini Departments

The Rocking Horse Winner...	92
The Explosion...	92
The (Fucking) Champs...	93
Resurreccion...	93
Lance Hahn's Favorite Records...	114
Tim Barry's Favorite Records...	115
Bob Nanna's Favorite Records...	116
Mike Ski's Favorite Records...	118
Adam Goren's Favorite Records...	120

## Musical Discourse

The (International) Noise Conspiracy...	25
Zero Zero...	31
Anti-flag...	37
Isis...	45
Henry Rollins...	52
Rival Schools...	57
The Q and not U...	67
Cadillac Blindside...	73
Built to Spill...	82
Rocket from the Crypt...	85
Tenacious D...	95
Mike Park...	104
Slash...	107
Mr Lady Records...	111
Strike Anywhere...	123
Unitas...	130





# Law of Inertia Magazine

## Issue #10: Winter 2001

### Wishes he was more like John Cusack than Jack Black:

Ross Siegel

>> Publisher/co-editor/art director/slave driver/penny pincher/hungry  
Eats the scraps off Jonah's table  
E-mail me: ross@lawofinertia.com

### Wishes he was more like Johnny Cash than Johnny Depp:

Jonah Bayer

>> Co-editor/promotions/god of good ideas/reviews guru/snowflake  
Keeps Ross on a short leash  
E-mail me: jonah@lawofinertia.com

**People With Pens:** Ross Siegel, Jonah Bayer, Jacob Futernick, David Kaplan, Adam Lindenbaum, Maria Catamero, Heidi Diehl, Nick Powers, Jon Orren, Mike Ski, Adam Goren, Bob Nanna, Lance Hahn, Tim Barry, Megan Callow, Sarah Sternau

**People Who Hate Bad Records:** Ross Siegel, Jonah Bayer, du proserpio, Adam Parks, Jason Murphy, Adam Thorman, Jonah Brucker-Cohen, Dan Frantic, Nick Tamburro

**People With Cameras:** Ross Siegel, Jonah Bayer, Jacob Futernick's friends, Karen Hodges, Jerry Guzman, Mike Dubin, Sergio Cilli, David Pujol, Michael Childers, Sean Murphy, Ray Mickshaw, Tim Owens

**Microphone Check** (commas and spelling errors): Ross Siegel, Jonah Bayer, Lyndsay Siegel, du proserpio, Nick Powers, Jon Orren, Meg Crowley, Kate Goldstein-Briar

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>> **CD Sampler:** Heretofore, every issue of Law of Inertia will have a CD sampler included with every ass-kicking copy (we might even make a few more to give out at shows). If your band or a band on your label wants to have a song on that bad boy, e-mail us immediately and we will get you the details. Space fills up so damn quick it would make your head spin. Do not send a song if you are in Piebald.

>> **Press Run:** 5000 killer copies

>> **Back Issues:**

#1-4 Soul Doubt

#5 W/ Jimmy Eat World, One King Down, Atom and His Package, Kid Dynamite, At the Drive-in, Adamantium, Bluetip, Fireside, Brian McTernan.

#6 W/ Saves the Day, Braid, Good Clean Fun, Time in Malta, The Grey AM, American Steel, AFI, Planes Mistaken for Stars, The Alkaline Trio.

#7 Women in Punk Issue W/ Indecision/The Muffs, Le Tigre, Discount, Rocket-Fuel, Hit it or Quit it, Jejuné, Co-Ed, Fiddler Records, Susan Wills, Idle Hands, Apples in Stereo, Blue Ghost PR.

#8 W/ Botch, Berzerk, Hot Rod Circuit, 6 Going on 7, Murder City Devils, Hum/National Skyline, The Faint, Poison the Well, Lifter Puller, Silent Majority, Jimi Cheetah, Warrant.

#9 W/ Godspeed You Black Emperor, Death Cab for Cutie, Hanging Like a Hex, Ultimate Fakebook, This Year's Model, Drowningman, Eastern Youth, Tugboat Annie, Propagandhi, Glasveater, Dillinger 4, Tristeza, BS2000, Cave-in, Nora, Melissa Howard (of the Real World)

>> All back issues are \$4 ppd.

Go to our website for more information on back issues.

>> **Review Policy:** The Law of Inertia review staff will consider all records (CD format is preferred), zines, movies, videos, books, and websites for review. Due to the boat loads of submissions we receive-- and the intention of not

It's amazing how one's life priorities can change at the drop of a hat. It's absolutely incredible how a person can have an experience that throws his world view into a flux-- perhaps for the rest of his existence. You hear about people who get run over by a car, lose the use of their legs, and then go onto promote traffic safety in Congress or another such inanity when all that person wanted was to get to their high-paying job the day they got run over. I think the whole nation knows what I'm talking about right now. You go about your daily life-- get your morning coffee and newspaper, walk down the street on the way to the subway, then you look up and at that moment you feel as if your cozy little world has just collapsed forever.

I don't mean to sound melodramatic. In fact, the story just above is exactly what happened to me on September 11th, 2001. Until I suddenly looked up and realized what all the commotion around me was about, I was all set for a day of school, work, and Law of Inertia duties. We were just about to finish this issue of Law of Inertia-- our 10th if you're counting-- when the whole staff understandably lost interest in punk rock publishing and pretty much all forms of productivity. Punk rock seemed pretty silly in the grand scheme of things. You realize how feeble and trite our scene can be when something like the events of the 11th happen in front of your very eyes. Inter-scene quibbling, punk politics, and music are hardly solace when you just witnessed thousands of people die in front of you. The only thing that matters is your friends at that point. Their safety and their proximity are the most important things, I think. So, after I saw what I did I went straight to Tim Holden's and proceeded to field calls from everyone I have ever known in my life while watching the "America Attacked" news specials.

For a few weeks there I had absolutely no interest in working on Law of Inertia. Jonah, being his usual understanding self, was more than compassionate and gave me ample time to figure out what I needed to do before (and if) we finally finished this damn thing. Before the 11th, I was very very psyched for this issue. A perfect bound cover, a CD sampler, our longest issue to date were more than enough to have my itching in my britches to get this issue out already. Nonetheless, for three weeks I didn't check any LOI related e-mail, which is the longest I've gone since I started this damn zine.

But I finally got my head together, sort of, and decided I was going to finish this issue come hell or high water. But where to start? I would have hated to print this issue without a single mention or article on the events of the 11th. But I didn't want to partake in the voyeurism that so much of the mainstream and alternative media has. So I thought I would simply acknowledge the events in my revised column and release what we hope is our best issue yet. I'm not so sure anymore. I don't mean to sound vain, but I'm not sure of a lot of things right now. I mean, hell, we're going to war and here I am contributing nothing to the world but a damn magazine about punk rock. The only comfort I can find is that if we as Americans want to lead normal lives, unaffected and unintimidated by terror and fear, then we need to have distractions... no matter how distracting they may be.

So, this is our comfort issue. It's our way of saying we aren't beaten, we won't be beaten, and we won't lie down with our hands at our sides while the world walks all over us while our government walks all over them. Instead, we will try to be the best, most productive people we can in the wake of such a terrible tragedy. As I told a friend recently, if we don't make the world a better place for everyone-- if we don't get up in the morning and promote change-- then those 5000+ people died in vain. I will not let that happen.

This issue is dedicated to Tim Holden, Jessica Behm, and my parents, without whose love and compassion I would have a hard time making it through the past few weeks.

-Ross Siegel

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After all these years, I can still remember the pre-concert ritual: the hours spent enlarging the already gaping holes in my stone-washed Levis by hand. At some point, I got a nosebleed (I experienced them quite often when I was younger) and held my gaping nose over the jeans, staining them with my own brand of crimson paint. Metal.

My mom thought Guns N' Roses were a "bad influence," but apparently not too bad, because she took me to see my favorite band at the ripe age of 12. For those of you who were still listening to the New Kids back in '91, this was the golden age of G N'R: fresh off Appetite for Destruction and prior to the release of terminally delayed Use Your Illusion albums. I don't remember the entire show, but bits and pieces linger in the recesses of my memory: opening act, Skid Row's frontman, Sebastian Bach, encouraging the crowd to sing "Ice Ice Baby, Fuck off! Fuck off!" People giving bemused looks to a 12-year-old kid who looked like he just came from a slaughterhouse. Couples making out in the lobby. Axl Rose wearing a Nine Inch Nails shirt and running around like a complete madman. Finally, I remember being tired after standing on my chair for hours on end.

What does this have to do with Law of Inertia? Well, virtually ten years to the date of that concert, I found myself face to face with Slash and had the uncanny feeling that my life had come full-circle. Today, instead of being a slack-jawed pre-teen, I am almost a college graduate, but the feelings I experienced on that magical night haven't changed—they've grown. That's why instead of interning at a law firm this summer I went to Europe with Jimmy Eat World. It's also why I spend hours reviewing records instead of going to the bars. And ultimately, it's why this issue of Law of Inertia is in your hands right now.

People keep asking me if there will be an issue 11. Well here at LOI, we treat every issue as if it's our last, because it might be. But barring any mental breakdowns, computer crashes, and fistfights, I have a feeling this won't be the last you see of Ross and me. In the last six months I've interviewed some of my favorite musicians, discovered dozens of innovative new bands, and even met a girl or two along the way. I'm not sure if my fashion sense has improved since the G'N R concert.

Obviously, everything isn't perfect, especially in light of the events of September 11th. As an editor, I feel like it's impossible not to mention this catastrophe, but at the same time, I don't know what to say. Unlike Ross, I don't live in New York City and I feel relatively detached from the entire incident; it's as if CNN was continuously looping the movie "Die Hard." But they aren't. This is real life. I've read a lot of essays in the underground community that say punk rock seems insignificant compared to the uncertain fate of the American public. I disagree. In fact, punk rock (or music in general) is one of the only things that has helped me and many people I know cope with the events. Good music is a release, a healer. And though America is far from healed, barring any uncalculated retaliatory actions from our "president," I think music can help us all. So for a minute forget about the scene politics, forget about what kind of pants are in style, forget about who's dating whom, and really listen to what's going on around you. Van Morrison came closest to when he sang, "Turn up your radio and let me hear the song. Then we can get down to what is really wrong." But this time, don't just turn it up, fucking crank it.

Ross refers to this copy as our "anniversary issue" and for me, it seems strangely appropriate. It's a personal anniversary, celebrating the last decade of my life and my inevitable transition into adulthood. Hey Slash, here's to the next ten years...

Devils Horns and Power Chords,  
Jonah Bayer, Co-Editor

**The tenth issue of our damn fine publication: and the best one yet... damnit. Can't touch this.**

## The Winter Music Saved Us

overloading each issue with reviews of pap—we cannot promise anything will be reviewed for sure. However, if we feel that the submission fits our format then there's a damn good chance that it will receive our comments... eventually. Note: please please please please please do not e-mail us to ask if your submission will be reviewed. That's really annoying and we hate writing reviews while annoyed and we usually give the object of our annoyance a negative review. It helps to put your CDs in a plastic baggy, or hey even a jewel case. CDs get scratched, you know. Oh yeah, don't bother sending us CD-Rs. They just get thrown away. You can't expect a review if you are too cheap to send a finished copy.

**>> Law of Inertia would like to buy the world a Coke, and then give these people who we like Pepsis:** Ross and Jonah's families (including Jonah's mean father for taking us out to delicious Chinese food), all the writers, all the bands who helped out, the advertisers, the love and support of Maria @ Blue Ghost (for making us laugh), Virgil @ Suburban Home (for being the coolest, most down-to-earthest guy in Colorado), Jessica Behm, Tim Holden (even though he flaked for the first time since issue #2), Mike Ski (for tattooing Ross and not hating the LOI), Ana Saldamando (for not pressing charges and staying my friend), Zaq and Cadillac Blindside, Ryan from Hanging Like a Hex, Trevor @ Nasty Little Man, Vanessa @ Fat Wreck (for being the coolest publicist on the left coast and having her own HBO series), Ghazal @ Revelation (for making Krazy Fest an awesome time), Jessica Hopper (for slandering LOI in PP), Fred @ Triple Crown, Jerry Guzman, Georgi (for being duck-billed and amazing), Ross' new roomies at 321 W. 44th, Aaron and Oscar of De La Hoya, Jon Orren (for the verbal shit This Year's Model, Dan Frantic, Megan Callow (my favorite flake), du proserpio, Derek @ Girlie Action, Judy Wolfe, Justin @ Close to Nothing, Kate Goldstein-Briar (aka OddJob aka Lambchop... for being the best surprise in a long time), Nick Powers (good luck in Gabutti), Matt Wang (for being impressed), LJ Fogel (for being twice as energetic as Ross), John Davis and the Q and Not U, Jason Pettigrew, Dave Segal (for taking Jonah to the coolest party in Cleveland, ever), Norman

Wonderly, Aaron Wilson, Todd Hutlock, Michele Fleischi, Rick Marino and Jimmy Eat World (for being so hospitable in a foreign land), Sarah A. Sternau, Tim Greene, Lisa Turallo, Dan Broslovsky, Barb Adams (your input helped improve my writing by leaps and bounds), Paul Cody, Chris "Anderson" Rager, Dan Patton, Bruce King, Steve at NLM, Bill Nesper and Jason Rockhill, Hignell Printing, the dorks in the Reunion Show, Jack Black and Kyle Gass, Melissa Howard, Dave Stone, Micah Abrams, Heidi Diehl, Karen Sundell and Slash (for living up to all of my expectations), Katherine Levin (even though she never calls), Vanessa Bayer, Pablo (still Ross' girlfriend), Bobbo (still a great guy), Lauren Lamott (for finally paying us), Mike Shea (for the helpful advice), Adam Parks, Mike Cubillos, Nate Covey (for putting Jonah up in Philly), Jason Consoli, Jay Simpson, Jesse Mann, Annie Noble (in Spain), Sergio Cilli, and everyone who voted for us in the 2001 Zine Guide and inflated our egos. You rock.

**>> The editors of Law of Inertia** cannot be held responsible for any of the claims, concerns, comments, jokes, mishaps, mistakes, miscommunications, and mysteries held herein. We especially refuse to take any and all blame associated with Jake Futernick's wanton lust for the destruction of evil coffee chains, Heidi's fashion ineptitude, Adam's cell phone induced brain tumors, or Nick's love of pirated software/music. As a matter of fact, we think these people are strange strange individuals who are in dire need of psychoanalysis on the scale of Woody Allen or Tony Soprano. Just so you're forewarned, keep all knives away from David Kaplan, don't even think about letting Dean Proserpio get started on the subject of the funk, keep your girlfriends away from LJ Fogel, and if you and Jason Murphy happen to be at Starbucks in Astor Place one rainy afternoon do not bring up the topic of video or sound art. We will, however, take all praise and credit for Sarah Jessica Parker's hair in Sex in the City, Regis' wardrobe on Who Wants to be a Millionaire, and anything good that has happened in New York City or San Francisco in the past ten minutes. Oh yeah, the Eiffel Tower... that was us. Fuck war. Start talking, stop fighting, continue learning.

**Ross wishes that Janeane Garafollo wanted him. Jonah wishes Ross wanted him.**



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# Letters

Yo,

You put your e-mail address in the fuckin' zine, so you should expect kooks like me to write (I think you actually look forward to shit like this).

Anyway, I just wanted to let you know I really dig yo' shit-the mag is put together very well, and I rather enjoy the cornucopia of bands you cover, as well as the questions you ask. What compelled me to write however, was your reviews...I agreed with ALL of them. All too often I seem to read reviews where the person just can't wait to shit on something-you seem to love and appreciate music, regardless of genre or label...very refreshing.

I just wanted to say one thing about one review-the one on "Yours Truly" by Sick of it All. A week ago I would have agreed wholeheartedly...but upon purchasing their new video (which is pretty neat, yet not as encompassing as other bands, such as "Instrument") I went back and listened to "Yours Truly" a couple more times-- I think it's a great record. You didn't say it wasn't, but you sounded the way I felt-- "it's good, but stick with 'Scratch the Surface'". I just recommend giving it some more spins...but it is weird when "hardcore" bands write songs, isn't it? Check out the video man-- it has all the promo clips they've done, and the one for "District" off the new record is pretty fuckin cool in my opinion. Weeee! The band is a cartoon! Coooool!

Peace be with you,  
DennY G

"I was looking for a job and then I found a job..."

P.S. Do you have those big ass plugs in your ears? I hate that shit..

Fuck Youth Crew Rulecore!

Dear DennY G,

Thank you so much for the kind words about our shit-the mag. You are correct in your assumption that we like to get mail. Who doesn't? Hell, I was just telling a woman by the mailboxes of my apartment building that I even love getting bills in the mail-- at least I know that someone is thinking of me. Yes, for the record, the reason we put our e-mail addresses on the 3rd page of every issue is so people will e-mail us.

Anyways, I really enjoy the bands we cover as well, especially Godspeed You Black Emperor, which, from your tag-line of "Fuck Youth Crew Rulecore," I would guess you dig as well. As for the reviews, you agreed with all of them? Wow dude, that's really nice of you. In my biased opinion, I think we have some of the best reviews I've seen in any zine in a while. Certainly they are at least more informative than those 3 line reviews Punk Planet has. But *all* of them? Wow! I have to say, I think Dean's Congress review and Adam's Still Dreadful reviews were absolutely hysterical, so there you go.

Anyway, I just saw Sick of it All here in New York City and they surely impressed. While I have to stand by my review of their recent record, the songs they played live smoked. I always thought that Sick of it All live is a force to be reckoned with, but they never seem to capture that energy on tape. Oh well. I will check out their video, which I am guessing is something like the Red Hot Chili Pepper's "Roller Coaster of Love" video based on your "weeee" onomatopoeia.

Al-Salam Alaikum,  
Ross Siegel, Law of Inertia

Hey Law of Inertia,

Hope all is well. The last issue killed me with your talks of girls and problems around the sexy sex stuff. I feel the same at times. It is hard when you think a girl has more skills but at the same time I find it to be more of a turn on that she knows what is down and what she wants. Be it sex or relationship.

Whatever,  
Tony

Dear Tony,

Yes, from what I am gathering from my friends my talk of all the "sexy stuff" in the last issue "killed" a lot of people. As could be expected, a lot of my friends were pretty sore with my opinions in my column and how I relate to sex. So, I think I'm going to make a public apology to all my female friends who think-- for reasons valid or invalid-- that sex is something I have a lot of issues with.

A good friend of mine disagrees with my claim that *everyone* has issues with sex and sexual conduct. She says that some people are completely and totally comfortable with all things sexual, sexy, and sex. I disagree. I think everyone is confused about sex, even the slightest little bit. What I was hoping to do was promote conversation about the topics covered in that column, like boy-friends talking to girlfriends or just friends talking to friends. And, from what a lot of you have told me in your e-mail, much conversation was, in fact, the result of my column, and for that I am happy.

But, I don't want anyone to think for a second that I dislike or look down on women or promiscuous women at that. I do not... at all. My only problem is that for some reason I prefer to work out my problems for the whole world to read instead of in private which is probably the smarter place to do it. Do all offended parties forgive me?

Loving the Ladies a bit too much,  
Ross Siegel, Law of Inertia

Dear Law of Inertia,

Read your zines a couple of times when they were lying around at my girlfriend's apartment. I really like your way of writing and expressing yourself. You somehow always seem to choose the right words in order to describe things that aren't easy to describe. Guess that is the ability of a good writer, well I think you are one. By the way, Ross, you and my girlfriend already wrote each other a couple of mails in the past. Her name is Grit and she (just like me obviously) lives in Germany. I don't really have a subject that I wanted to write about, I am just bored, interested in your zine (and therefore you cause, Ross, you ARE this zine, although I know that you are not the only one who works for it) and searching for someone to write to. I know it is sad that I don't just talk to someone nearer but perhaps you know how things can go. Read on your webpage that there is an interview(?) with Henry Rollins coming up in issue 10 of Law of Inertia... I think that is really cool because I have almost read every book by this man and I am really interested what issues will come up in this conversation with him. I'd really like to know what he thinks about hardcore music, if he still thinks about it at all. He's really interesting and I adore him somehow although I don't ever wanna switch lives with him. Anyways, that's just one thing I wanted to tell you: that I am looking forward to issue 10. Personally I listen to a lot of Poison the Well, American Nightmare and Twelve Tribes at the moment. The last band got a horrible review on their first CD in issue 9. I really like them but I knew what the guy who wrote the review (was it you?) meant when he wrote that, I guess their music isn't really easy to follow sometimes. I also like Christie Front Drive and Boy's Life when it comes to slower tunes. Damn, why am I writing you all this, anyway?

Take care and keep up this zine, it's worth it.  
-Hendrik-

Dear Hendrik,

Thanks so much for the kind words. I really really appreciate it. At this time, with my city and my nation going nuts, it means a lot to hear kind words. Yes, I remember dear Grit. She seemed cool and so does her boyfriend. Tell her hello for me.

Just to respond to some things you said below:  
A good writer? Hmm... not sure about that. I have so much trouble organizing my thoughts. I am a very hyperactive, ver-

bose person and I often have too much to say. I'm not so much a good writer but I am good at making a tough subject a bit more simplified. Thanks, that's really reassuring to hear.

The Henry Rollins interview is really cool. I recommend you check it out. It was a dream come true to talk to him. He was very nice and very sincere (although don't try to interrupt him, it's futile). Unfortunately he interpreted my questions the way he wanted to and not as I meant them so we didn't get to talk about hardcore. We did, however, have a very interesting discussion nonetheless.

And, as for me being the zine? No way dude. I am merely the central figure in this zine since I put my name in so many places all over it. But, Jonah is as much Law of Inertia as I am. He is just as dedicated and just as involved in the day to day activities and construction of each issue as I ever was. He is the torch bearer, and whenever I lose interest in LOI, which is all the time, he convinces me to keep going. Plus, writers like Tim Holden, Adam Lindenbaum, Dean Proserpio, Dan Frantic, Jason Murphy, etc, make this zine what it is. I thank you for saying such a thing, but it is not true. LOI is a network of good friends.

Lastly, I saw Poison the Well at a hardcore festival called Krazy Fest (put on by Initial Records) and they fucking ruled. They were the best band at the fest with the possible exception of the Dillinger Escape Plan who played with Sean from Coalesce. Both were also incredible.

Okay, back to the madness for me. Thanks for writing.

Take care,  
Ross Siegel, Law of Inertia

I watched the twin towers burning from a train on the Manhattan Bridge, hundreds of feet above the East River. And again from Union Square at 14th street, where the image of the towers, flames, and column of smoke took up the entire southern sky.

After the buildings had fallen I walked across the city to Houston Street and the West Side Highway on the Hudson River, just 15 blocks from what was the WTC. It seemed that the Earth had cracked open and swallowed the city, and replaced it with a tremendous volcanic crater spewing ash and smoke.

As I waited during the day, and later on a train home, and that night with the acrid smell of the smoke and dust drifting through Brooklyn, I had a profound and lasting sense of grief. Amid the absolute devastation, another emotion crept through me that day less noble, a feeling of doubt. That the life I live, the music I am involved with, and the musicians and labels I share my studio with might be trivial. I knew that feeling was wrong, and fought it all day. A guitarist I know offered that the important thing was that we live and work in a place where you CAN create music, and that is not trivial.

I thought of the thousands of people that have told me in person how much music meant to them.

I thought that music and all the arts inspire people to be creative, to have compassion, to be self expressive, and to show love. Then I thought that music and the arts are the opposite and antithesis of the terror at the WTC. And the doubt disappeared.

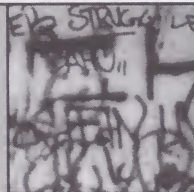
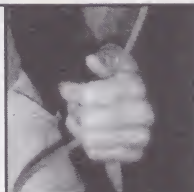
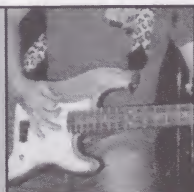
Don Fury  
Cyclone Sound

Dear Don,

Well put.

Peace,  
Ross Siegel, Law of Inertia

FYI, any letters or e-mail you send us become our property, as we are greedy greedy mofos. Send us lots of mail.





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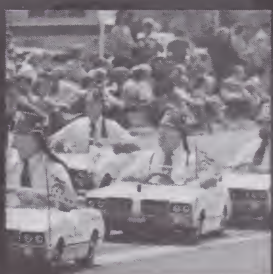
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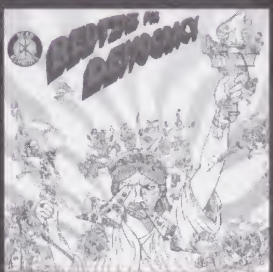
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7



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8



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NUMBER 12 / DECEMBER 01



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# Unsatisfied Field

by ross siegel

I had a few ideas for this issue's edition of my column, *Unsatisfied*. In this column I usually rant and rave about why I hate working, love, sex, or various other personal gripes I have with the world. Some of my ideas for this issue were writing why I opposed George Bush's nuclear missile shield plan/American's inevitable secession from the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty/the inevitable militarization of space. On September 11th I quickly threw all those ideas out the window. America changed and so did I. I once heard that a Republican is a Democrat who's been mugged. I couldn't agree more. While I am certainly not a Republican after the World Trade Center attacks, I think I became a bit more conservative as I watched the second plane hit the towers on my way to work that morning. For the first time in my life I was unbelievably scared, somewhat patriotic, and mad as hell at all those who were not naturalized within America's borders. While the news media and everyone else tries to unravel what the emotional and physical response to the attacks should be, I felt anger at the powers that be for not listening to one another. I felt I had a huge burden on my shoulders for not doing anything about my sometime fear of something like this happening to our country. I also was scared as hell that America would find ourselves in another Vietnam: a long and pointless war that couldn't be won against an enemy we didn't know in a land across the world. Like everyone in this country I have been analyzing everything about my life and how I live it. Bare with me:

A few days after the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, a good friend told me that at that moment she didn't want to talk to anyone who didn't feel the same way she did about the events and the results that could ensue. She didn't want to be around people with dissenting ideas or emotions. At that time she simply wanted to live in a little shell with only others who understood exactly what she felt and agreed wholeheartedly. Everyone in America probably felt similarly whether they admitted it or not. Since the 11<sup>th</sup>, we've all heard accounts of that day and summaries of the collective American emotional climate. While walking in the West Village of New York City that night with my friend, where the air was still thick with the smell of burning and a huge cloud of ash and debris still clung to the New York City skyline, I understood exactly what she meant. I can't remember if I told her—that entire day seems like a blur of running, screaming, crying, and finally a strong urge to drink copious amounts of alcohol—that while I may not agree on the political issues and implications of the attacks with her, I too only wanted to be with people who were like-minded. Thus, I found refuge that day and in subsequent ones in the same place so many others did: with my friends.

Over two weeks later, I've walked the streets of NYC up and down. I've been to all the places you people in Texas have been seeing nightly on the news. I saw the memorials in Union Square and Washington Square Park, I cheered on the rescue workers on the West Side Highway, I went to the Upper East side to try and give blood, and I even went to Wall Street to witness the damage first hand. It is no secret that the American public's attention span is remarkably short. While I criss-crossed the city and fielded telephone calls from everyone I've ever known in my life I couldn't help but wonder if the events of that Tuesday had been a mistake. Like a bad dream that one simply cannot

wake up from, I felt as if the events weren't real. Instead, I felt that all I needed was a shot of adrenaline to my heart and I would sit up and realize that the government had done its job of protecting us and that no... the rest of the world does not hate America. I haven't woken up yet and I'm not holding my breath.

In this day and age of media-saturation stimuli-overload we as Americans tend to forget issues not concerning our daily lives as soon as they pass from the front page of the paper to the 14<sup>th</sup> page. Anyone who believes me to be wrong need only analyze the last few years worth of American-related terrorism to see that all the signs were pointing to a September 11<sup>th</sup> attack for some time. Eighteen US military personnel killed in a peace keeping mission in Somalia, US embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya, the first World Trade Center bombing, the USS Cole attack, etc. They were all front page news... for a good week and a half after the fact before the American public totally forgot about this stuff. I bet you didn't even know that about two years ago a guy tried to drive a car filled with explosives across the Canadian border to Seattle. And, had you followed the trials or investigations that resulted from these acts of violence you would have noticed a name that kept on coming up again and again: Osama Bin Laden. Hell, if you had read the last few issues of LOI you would have seen forewarnings of a September 11<sup>th</sup>. Nonetheless, Americans forgot about the prior attacks—or rather, lost interest—and issues that more directly affected us like the economy, stem cells, Gary Condit, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge made the front page while the first WTC attack trials were relegated to the 15<sup>th</sup>.

I'm not trying to rub this in your faces. I'm not trying to say that the American public is stupid or that we turn the other way when danger isn't in our back yard. We're not stupid, we're not indifferent. We, like any other nation, have so much to do in a single day that worrying about terrorists in Israel or oil trade complications simply falls off our radar. People have to put food on the table, and when your dinner is Chez Paris one night but could be Chez McDonald's the next if the economy fails the question of where one's interest lies in a no-brainer. But, still, the signs were all there.

Earlier this year, a congressional report was issued detailing where America's security is flawed. The report criticized everything from the airline industry to the information superhighway infrastructure and demanded that American government pour billions of dollars into the maintenance of these entities in order to prevent a September 11<sup>th</sup>. Still, President Bush and his secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, decided that the best way to protect American soil was through a highly complicated, monumentally expensive missile shield that few believed would ever even function up to acceptable standards. Tests—which cost in the neighborhood of \$100 million each—had already begun months prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>. W. and Rumsfeld felt that the greatest threat to national security for the time being were so-called "rogue" nations possessing weapons of mass destruction (how come when other countries have weapons of any size larger than a shotgun they are "weapons of mass destruction," yet when America has them they are "defensive" weapons) like Iran, Pakistan, and North Korea who were apparently liable to toss a nuke or two over here because they didn't know any better. Had Mr. Bush listened to his National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, during his campaign and after as she was installed as the director of the NSA, he would have noticed that she felt the greatest threat to national security was not a group of super-empowered nations with nuclear capabilities but rather a handful of super-empowered people with a phone line and a personal computer. Of course, in an article I read only 8 months it seemed that our president didn't even know what he was up against. The article went something like this:

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on the Taliban?

W.: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: You know, the oppressive Muslim regime in Afghanistan?

W.: Oh, right, the Taliban. I thought you were asking about some other band.

I'm not making this up.

Some people have accused Ms. Rice of running this country. They say it is not Colin Powell or Dick Cheney and certainly not George W. that calls the shots in Washington,

but rather the iron-fisted Rice who says what's what. It's too bad this isn't the case or a tragedy like those on the 11<sup>th</sup> might have been averted.

You see, Condoleezza was right. It was not Iran or North Korea who attacked us and struck fear into the hearts of everyone in this nation but rather a group of super-empowered, super-creative individuals who had no qualms with dying for a cause. It's likely they used technology in ways the CIA and the FBI counterintelligence teams hadn't thought to prevent against and it's likely that scores of potential terrorists live all over the world, many in our own nation. Damn it, I just read that Interpol has known for months that Osama Bin Laden's chief lieutenant may be living in Germany. These people were determined, dedicated, focused, and mad as hell. The FBI and the INS simply were not quick or organized enough to deter their plans. And because of that over six-thousand people are dead.

The reason I brought up that anecdote about my friend earlier was because in the wake of the attacks where suddenly everyone is an expert on Muslims, Middle Eastern Affairs, terrorism, holy wars, American foreign policy, American government, the Taliban, and the accounts of what happened prior to the attacks, I just don't want to be around any of these people. For the first time since I was thirteen I haven't read the paper in a week. I think televised news is a joke in general, and I haven't felt the need to read anything more than the stupid zines I get in the mail each day (which are really stupid, mind you). There are a few reasons for this. One may be that the week of the attacks I read so much, watched television so voraciously, and talked so much that weeks later I simply have no energy to discuss or absorb anymore. I simply have no room left in my brain and no energy left to process all the information and opinions coming out about these attacks. I have no interest right now in listening to this expert and that commentator discuss what went wrong. I guess my thought is that what's done is done, we can't change the past, now let's go about picking up the pieces. Another reason may be that everywhere I go in New York city there is some who feels the need to scream his/her views on the matter

across a café or in my ear. I have heard two hundred different ideas for what America's response should be—and in defense of those loud-mouths, everyone I've met has made at least one good point—and I'm sick of hearing it. I don't want to hear that Americans should bomb the hell out of Afghanistan, I don't want to hear that we are fighting the Taliban in addition to any terrorists they may be harboring, I don't want to listen to you talk about how we shouldn't be aiding Israel in their war against the Palestinians, and I sure as hell don't want to hear unrealistic (no matter how ideal) claims that there should be peace with not a



single bullet fired. I disagree with you all, and right now I just want to rock back and forth in my new apartment and talk to someone that feels the exact same way I do.

If you're still reading you do want to hear what I feel.  
Here it is:

--- I want America to stop pretending that we are the first nation in the history of the world to be attacked or to have terrorism inside its borders. Remember that place called Yugoslavia? Remember that small nation the size of New Jersey known as Israel? How about Ireland or Basque country in Spain? Um, there's Egypt, and Algeria, and Colombia, and the Ukraine. Oh wait, how could I forget those Sarin gas attacks in Japan or Turkey. Yes, I feel like shit right now. Yes, I'm sad. But are we the first nation in history to have a terrorist attack? Certainly not. Sure terrorist attacks on this scale have never happened, but in some places in the world which will not show up in the New York Post stuff like this is a daily occurrence. I read somewhere that a European diplomat to the United Nations called this a genocide. C'mon people, this sucks yes, but let us not sit in our little bubble as Americans and think that just because we have lots of money and lots of big guns that we are separate from the rest of the world. Have some compassion for those that have to deal with this every day.

--- I want the American people to wake up and start realizing that there is more to the world than what is on the front page of the New York Times. Alternative news sources seem to have the best, most no-holds-barred coverage of this event. Tom Brokaw is a fucking lightweight compared to the last issue of the Economist, the BBC, or what you see if you dig even deeper. The world has been a scary place for some time now, but then again we were all far too concerned with goddamn stem cells to worry about Osama Bin Laden predicting a big headache for America three weeks prior to September 11th in the British press. Anyone that reads a good daily paper even occasionally could see that Americans were resting on their laurels. Please start reading and learning about the various problems of the world. They may seem insignificant compared to what's happening in your backyard, but they may just be in your backyard one day.

--- I want to make damn sure that Osama bin Laden is responsible for these attacks before we go to war against him. Recently, while describing America's negotiations with Nato commanders, Colin Powell proclaimed that he had given "pretty good" evidence to Nato of bin Laden's involvement. Even though Nato accepted the proof as credible enough to warrant military action, Powell still found it important to note that "this isn't a court case, this evidence shouldn't be treated like this is a court case." What do we make of this? Well, for starters it says that the US really has negligible "proof" of bin Laden's involvement. The military is acting on a whim based on a publicly conceived notion that bin Laden is surely the culprit here. As I said, we're seeing red and the public will not stand for this man to stay free at this juncture. Powell also went on to imply that based on the evidence the CIA had against bin Laden for the USS Cole and African embassy bombings, the US would be vindicated if they captured him. God, this is so dumb. This argument is about as ridiculous as schoolyard rational for a brawl. No concrete proof, just a whim and a feeling of damaged egos? Well, there goes the constitution. Not to mention that when the Taliban says that if bin Laden is targeted without concrete proof (which will never be concrete enough for them) then all Americans and Jews around the world are fair game for a killing spree... we should listen. Do not shoot first and ask questions later.

--- I would love my government to stop telling me that we are at war with whoever is protecting these terrorists. We don't even know who they are, what they look like, or where they are. If we did September 11th might never have happened. My dad was in Vietnam and he has told me that the problem with that war is that we had no idea who we were fighting. We didn't know what they looked like, what they wanted, or where they lived. All we knew is that at some point in the conflict there was a cause, then there was a war, then there was apathy. I don't care what the state department says about any nations that harbors terrorists. Whether or not the government of Afghanistan is an oppressive institution does that mean we have to make the lives of the people residing in the poorest nation in the world even harder by bombing the hell out of them. It's not the 40 million people there who this war is against, it's a few very rich, very intelligent, very crazy people. And, as a good friend of mine says when it comes to Islamic fundamentalism or any fundamentalism for that matter: if you go into a city with 20 terrorists in it and level the city with air-to-ground missiles, when you leave there will be 500 terrorists ready for revenge. We need to think this through and I think right now we're seeing red. The South Pacific fleet is on its way, fully armed, to the Persian Gulf right now. What exactly do they think they going to do with those stealth bombers?

--- I want the United Nations to be very critical of the US'

plans for implementation of their war on terrorism. I want chapter 7 of the UN charter examined more closely. I want the world to help, mind you, and a war against terrorism can only be fought with the help of institutions like Interpol, the European Union, and NATO. I just don't want to see the world answering to the US' beck and call. Especially if it turns into a situation of the US digging a hole that has no bottom. This may sound like a no-brainer philosophy, but 10 years later in Iraq Saddam Hussein is still at large and the economic and military sanctions there have done more harm than good.

---- I want George W. to stop using the phrase "make no mistake" to veil his inarticulation.

--- I want Congress to take back the cash they just gave President Bush to wage a war on terrorism. I do not want the WTC attacks to be another Gulf of Tonkin: I don't want to be in the latter-day version of Vietnam (let's learn from the Russians). This should not be a war. If anything, it should be an eradication of terrorism. Let us not give Mr. Bush open-ended approval to do with as he pleases. Let's all learn from Richard Nixon and JFK, shall we?

--- I want America to continue nation building and education. Nation building is the only way to ensure friendly governmental practices around the world. George Bush and Colin Powell do not think so. Instead, until about 5 months ago the official US foreign policy was to have no foreign policy unless something directly affected us. I want to see American act as a peace keeper and arbitrator to international disputes. If we have the might and we're not afraid to use the muscle, why not help the world by promoting discussion of warring factions around the world no matter what nation they may reside in.

--- I do not want our civil liberties abridged... at all. Just because some terrorists use technology against us does not mean that the NSA has the right to comb my e-mails or phone calls any more than they may be doing already.

Similarly, I want freedom of religion and freedom of speech to be upheld more fervently than ever. This too may sound like a silly prospect to consider but remember the Japanese internment camps during World War II then go see the ridiculous movie "The Siege" and tell me how silly the idea really is (think, if ideas invade popular culture then they couldn't be too far from public consent... in my opinion). If John Ashcroft has his way the 4th amendment will be stamped upon and every Arab person in this nation will be herded into jails like cattle and kept until they are no longer useful. We cannot let this happen.

--- I do not ever want to see that video of the first WTC tower falling... ever again. It's burned into my brain permanently at this point.

--- I want Condoleezza Rice to run America. I want Bill Clinton to be her Secretary of State and Rudy Guiliani to be the Secretary of Defense.

--- I want George Bush to stop calling this a "crusade." We are not fighting a holy war as some people would like to think. This isn't about religion at all, don't make it into a religious war.

--- I also want George W. to apologize for calling our upcoming fight "the first war of the 21st century." Stop being so self-centered. There have been wars on almost every continent but North America almost non-stop throughout the dawn of the 21st century. What would the people in Kashmir, Chechnya, Israel, Ireland, parts of Mexico and South America, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Macedonia and Albania, Iraq, and parts of the Pacific Rim say to W.'s arrogant claim? They would say that we only consider geopolitical events when they concern Americans.

--- I want people to stop advocating unequivocal peace. This is unrealistic. People are going to get killed, let's just make sure that this doesn't bring about even more killing in the aftermath. Let's face it: in places like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Libya there are hundreds of thousands of people who would be honored to give their lives up to god; to be martyrs. Violence is not the answer. But, when it comes to a generation of people whose entire lives have been ingrained with anti-Americanism, we need to think things through a little better. Did you know that there are over 10,000 schools in the Middle East where Muslim boys are sent to memorize the Koran and

then learn the fundamentalist views therein?

It's even scarier when you find out that these hundreds of thousands of boys are pledging their allegiance to a book most of them have no idea how to read (remember, many Muslims do not speak Arabic).

--- I want George Bush to abandon his ridiculous missile shield. Wake up and smell the coffee, we've got better things to protect ourselves against than three hostile nuclear powers in the world.

--- I want America to stop being such a bully and I want Americans to examine the role institutions like the World Trade Organization and the World Bank are playing in impoverishing and angering third-world nations. Perhaps if we made the world a bit more egalitarian then people wouldn't be as pissed off at us as they are? Unfortunately, it not only hurts our check-books as Americans to be egalitarian, but it isn't as easy as spending a trillion dollars on the military. Perhaps the US' policy of spending over 10 times the more on military maintenance than the State Department is flawed? When groups like Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and bin Laden's Al Qaeda talk about hating Jews or Americans, they are really saying they hate us because our prosperity intimidates them and makes them jealous. Maybe if we made the world a more uniform place when it comes to economic prosperity this kind of anger could be lessened.

--- I want rocket launchers on top of the pentagon. I mean, isn't this type of thing common sense? The center of the US military should be better protected. Especially when some guy crashed his

plane into the White House not too long ago.

--- And most importantly, I want discussions with Arabs. War is not the answer, discourse is. The problem with Islamic fundamentalism started not because Muslims are more stubborn than any other people, but rather because a small few don't quite know how to peacefully communicate their views on the world and we were too self-centered to listen.

Okay, that's about it. I'm done for the day. I fear that in the next few months we will see America go to war—one they can't win, will not win, and won't even know that they have won if they do win—or start doing some introspection into how these people got so angry in the first place and what we can do to work with them and make the world a better place. I fear this will not happen though. Instead, I think America will eventually just forget about this whole matter. Maybe in 10 years after a no-fly zone around the entire Sahara desert has been enforced and broken time and time again Americans will go back to normal and it won't take 4 hours to get on a plane to Europe. As I said, America's attention span is short. I mean, look at the guy who sells me coffee every morning. For three weeks in a row he asked me about my views on the WTC attacks. But, a few days ago he started asking me if I thought the Mets had a chance at winning the pennant. Gosh, I told him, I forgot about them.

Written 10/3/01



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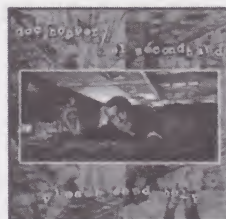
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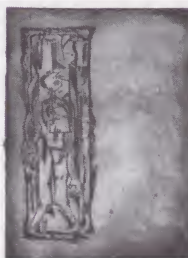
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13



# Diary of a Madman

## Diary of A Madman: Jonah Bayer

Halfway through my senior year of college, everyone seems to be asking me the same question, "What are you planning on doing after you graduate?" Usually, I stammer out an "Uh...I don't know," and flash an awkward smile-- which is often reciprocated. And while this answer comes off as a cop-out, it isn't. To be honest, I haven't really thought about my post-collegiate career at all. I have a vague idea of what I'd like to do, something involving music and writing: a Bangsian rock n' roll fantasy, if you will. But my grandparents don't know who Lester Bangs is, and if they did I doubt they would approve of me using my college education to emulate someone who spent most of his time getting high on cough syrup. So for the purposes of this column, I'm going to set aside my aspirations of being a rock journalist and analyze a few other possible scenarios.

### Look out Rupert Murdoch. It's Jonah, the television mogul!

There's always my major: Television-radio with a concentration in audio production. Sounds pretty complicated, doesn't it? I originally picked TV-R my sophomore year because it seemed like the major that assured me the highest possibility of getting a fun job. Did you ever see how happy those saps on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" look? But if there's one thing that my experience in Los Angeles taught me (see my column in issue 9), it's that everyone in the industry doesn't walk around smiling and wearing those snappy suits with the matching ties like Regis. The reality is, if you want to work for a television show in LA you're going to start as a production assistant or P.A.-- a fancy word for indentured servant. And I've got news for ya indentured servants circa 1600 technically had a better deal. During slavery, indentured servants were forced to work on farms for a specific amount of time, and when they were done they were let loose to ravage the land of opportunity. But in LA circa now even if you graduate from the menial, could-you-pick-up-coffee-for-everyone-then-make-some-copies-and-answer-phones-for-barely-enough-to-live-in-the-midwest-let-alone-Los-fuckin'-Angeles stage, you're still a million miles away from the hot seat. From P.A., you move onto another job with a slightly more important sounding title but just about the same amount of respect. I'm not too sure of what this type of job constitutes because I never made it this far during my short stint in LA; but I'm guessing that it consists of ordering around the P.A.'s; somehow giving the you a false sense of power-- even though these kids are in the same position you were six months ago. That's the thing with the industry, everyone wants to be a führer. It doesn't matter if the people on the bottom happen to be smarter, more qualified, and harder working than their supervisors; as long as the "boss" has someone to yell at about his or her coffee being too cold, the "man's" displaced insecurity is momentarily appeased. Pretty fucked up, isn't it? So this process repeats itself-- keep in mind, this takes years and years and possibly blowjobs-- until finally, by the time you're old enough to retire, you're in charge of a lot of people who make fun of you behind your back; and you're so senile from years of working your way up the corporate ladder that when you finally reach the top, you realize the rungs are all broken and you're lying on your back wondering what went wrong.

Admittedly, I may have over-dramatized a bit, but the perks are pretty weak unless you're into meeting celebrities and "being seen" out on the town. Going to Skybar every once in a while to catch a glimpse of Tori Spelling doesn't do it for me, sorry.

### Make way for Jonah, the hot-shot record producer!

Sounds fun, doesn't it? Like in that Metallica documentary where Bob Rock gets to hang out with the band and tell Lars to do "one more take," as he sits in a fancy studio with fancy equipment and acts like god's gift to the music industry. Well, it's all an illusion; what the hell has Bob Rock produced lately? Did you hear that awful record he put out with his own band, Rockhead? Let's stay *behind* the board, Bob.

Under the television-radio major, everyone has to pick a concentration, usually production or public relations or some other area of expertise. The rough definition of audio production is the recording of sound and music for inclusion in television or film. At first, I thought it

would be great. I would just hang out in the studio and record cool bands and afterwards we would go out and get blitzed and swap stories about groupies. But by reading our record reviews section (and you should see the swill that *doesn't* get reviewed!) you can see that most of today's music, well, sucks. In reality, your job will consist of sitting around a recording studio, most likely as an assistant or intern, and twisting knobs so that terrible local bands can have that all-important demo to shop around to a bunch of labels that probably won't even listen to it. If you're recording your friends' bands or your own it's a different story; but it's doubtful you're going to have enough friends in bands to make a living off of it. Plus, there's only much time that a human being can spend staring at a VU meter before they go clinically insane. I'm going insane just thinking about it. Of course, there are other areas of audio production that one can pursue. You can work for a company like Soundelux who edits music for film and records post-production dialogue called ADR. There's also foley work, where you stand in a studio shaking a giant slab of sheet metal for the illusion of thunder, or smash bottles on the floor to simulate the illusion of, uh, smashing bottles. While these jobs vary in their day to day activities, they still seem somewhat...well, useless. Who really cares if the engine of the Porsche during the car chase in the film "Legally Blonde" sounds realistic? (Keep in mind that I didn't actually see "Legally Blonde," and I doubt there's a car chase scene in that movie since Resse Witherspoon doesn't really seem like the car racin' type.) The reality is that for every J.Robbins and Brian McTernan there are a million other struggling producers who couldn't land a gig recording Speak 714.

From this perspective it looks like my entire major is a complete waste of time, right? Maybe. But at this point, it seems futile to switch; I'm tens of thousands of dollars and plenty of classes into TV-R. Besides, I think that having an actual college degree is more important than what the degree is in. How many philosophers do you know?

### Ladies and Gentlemen...Jonah, the rockstar!

In the Tenacious D television saga, Captain Ed tries to convince Jack and Kyle that "the rockstar ethos is a lie," and he might be right. But of all the aforementioned options, it's probably what I'm best at. I've been playing guitar for going on eight years now, and while I'm no Yngwie Malmsteen, I have more talent than most of these nu-metal whiners that are all over MTV. My band for the last few years, Mumm-ra, managed to play just about every punk show in Ithaca and even did a summer tour. Unfortunately, the tour was a financial failure, and subsequently may have been a premonition against this line of work. That's why I'm a bit apprehensive about making it my career. Decide for yourself...

For the purposes of this story, let's ignore the fact that we crashed our bright yellow Penske cargo van into the side of my parents' house-- that's another column all together. In fact, that incident was nothing compared to the finale of our weeklong jaunt. By some stroke of luck, Mumm-ra ended up playing the inaugural show at an indie record store in Lansing, Michigan called "Vinyl Addict Records." We rocked the fuckin' house, sold out of all of our merch, and had an all around fun time-- or as much fun as you can have in Michigan, I guess. Our drummer and other guitarist caught a ride to Buffalo with one of the



other bands, and our bassist Brent and I were getting ready to leave when I reached into my pocket to find spare change and tufts of lint...but no keys. I began to frantically search all over the venue, my pockets, and the parking lot looking for them, but they had mysteriously vanished. It was then that I realized that our guitarist had absent-mindedly gone back to Buffalo with my car keys. No big deal, we could just head back to Ohio tomorrow, right? Wrong. Our bassist Brent had to be in Akron in nine hours for a christening.

As we stood outside the club, with our hands in our pockets, in the middle of Michigan, fruitlessly trying to devise some sort of plan, a middle-aged gentleman walked by and offered us some assistance. He informed us that he owned a Mercedes and if he lost his keys "helicopters would come out and save him." I was thrilled for him, but that information didn't really do us any good. Luckily (depending on how you look at it), he did tell us about a key company that might be able to help us out (keep in mind, at this point it was 2:00AM). So I called them, and was informed that it would cost 350 dollars to get a key made at this time of the night. I hung up. No way. *There had to be another way.* Only a complete moron would spend 350 dollars for a procedure that normally would cost less than a tenth of that. After some brainstorming, weighing out our options, and lots of other unsuccessful phone calls, I called back and agreed. I took 200 dollars out the ATM, pooled all of the money we had made on tour, and we barely had enough to pay for it—a key.

So the guy from Hack's key service (never, ever use this company) finally got there, took off the door, made a mold of the key, and about an hour and 350 dollars later we were ready to roll. It only added insult to injury when he casually asked, "So am I taking all of your money?" I informed him that he was, but apparently it was just small talk because he didn't seem nearly as friendly when I tried to talk him down. Finally, around five in the morning, Brent and I hit the road, staying awake on French vanilla coffee and Hot Water Music, with the rest of the summer for us to pay off the debt and for me to ponder my stupidity.

While this experience didn't completely destroy my dreams of rock-stardom, it did give me a reality check to the nature of the game. I know I can live off Ramen noodles, but I don't know if my bank account can handle all the stupid mistakes and misfortune that this career choice will inevitably entail.

#### Making the folks proud: Jonah takes over the family business...

A hundred years ago, things would be easier; I wouldn't have to make this decision. Back in the day, I would just inherit the family business, work there for about fifty years, and pass it on to my son. So let's say I decide to get back to my "roots", and carry on the family business: Packaging & Shrink Wrapping Services.

Now don't get me wrong, my dad is a great guy, it would probably cost you at least a dollar more; so don't say he never did anything for ya either. But I just don't think I'm really cut out to be in charge of a business, especially one as exciting as...packaging. Of course, there's more to it than just shrink-wrapping indie rock mags: there's putting caps on spray paint cans, making displays, moving boxes from one side of the warehouse to the other, driving the tow motor, etc. Trust me, I worked there for three summers. If I actually took over the business I probably wouldn't have to do any of the manual labor, I'd have to boss people around and handle the books, and these are the two major obstacles preventing my lustrous title as, "The King of Plastic."

Bossing people around isn't a big deal—Ross is pretty much my bitch. It's the typical employee of the packaging company I'm nervous about bossing around—specifically the ex-convicts. Though they are the cheapest labor (unless you're Kathy Lee Gifford), most of these people are actually very nice and personable. However, I'm not sure how comfortable I am with yelling at people who have done time for manslaughter to tape up boxes faster. I would probably end up saying something like "Uh, could you please work a little faster, but if you don't want to that's cool," which wouldn't exactly boost productivity. At least my dad is a big guy and has some sort of intimidation thing going on, especially when he gets pissed. But I'm pretty skinny and there's always that underlying fear that one of these ex-cons in going to get fed up and WHAM! Throw me in a box and mail me to Afghanistan...or worse.

The business part, while having a lesser likelihood of bodily harm, still doesn't sit well with me. For the now painfully over-elaborated TV-R major, we had to take one business class sophomore year. I chose Introduction to Macroeconomics. It started out easy enough, "supply goes up, demand goes down," which sort of but not really justifies why anyone would pay over 500 dollars for a Judge record. Now, I don't really have a clear recollection as to what happened after that: I vaguely remember staring at graphs that looked like some mutation of a tic-tac toe board and having no idea what the hell I was doing. I also remember scribbling down notes as fast as I could at review sessions and even resorting to making flash cards, something I hadn't done since I had to cram for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade spelling bee (where I did pretty well, if memory serves). Somehow, I miraculously ended up scoring a B in that class. But if I get an F in the packaging biz I don't lose part of my scholarship, I destroy my entire family's source of income and make a lot of ex-murderers really pissed off at me. So to spare myself a compound fracture and forcing my parents out on the streets, I think I'll leave the packaging to my pops, for now.

#### Duh...it's Jonah the dropout!

So far these possibilities have all evolved around the assumption that I'm actually going to graduate from college. But in today's competitive job market a degree doesn't really secure you much of anything except a debt the size of our national, uh, debt. So I decided to toy with some careers that don't need a college degree; some careers I could get started on right away.

- 1) **Prostitution**- Aaah, the world's oldest profession. One thing I did pick up from macroeconomics is the aforementioned law of supply and demand. Every time I turn on COPS, it seems that they are arresting female 'tricks,' but where are all the male prostitutes? I think I may have found a future career. Sure, I'm not what you would call "sexually experienced," but I'm not going to let that stand in the way of my dream. In fact, I think there is definitely a market for scrawny prostitutes who need a haircut, right? If women have to resort to prostitutes how picky can they be?
- 2) **Truck Driver**- I was just telling my mom the other day on a car ride back from Philadelphia about my secret dream of being a truck driver. She jokingly referred to me as the "intellectual truck driver," but I think she was missing the point. The charm of truck driving is its lack of intellectualism and extraneous activities. It's just the open road and the wheels beneath you—what more could anyone ask for? There is nothing like driving long distances by yourself, whether you're singing out loud or pondering about the darkest issues in your life. Plus you get a CB radio so you can chat it up with other truck drivers and keep an eye out for "Mounties." (That's trucker lingo for the Cops. My best friend Kathy has a trucker's dictionary, no joke.)
- 3) **Welfare Recipient**- Definitely the easiest of all the professions, and just as potentially profitable. If I get this straight, I just need to sit around, watch Oprah, and eat ice cream sandwiches and I get a check every month from the government. I feel like they owe me something anyway— with all the money they tax me for on a daily basis— so it's sort of like they're just paying me back a loan, right? Plus this career leaves me a lot of free time to work on the zine or go to the library or alphabetize my CD collection. Sure, there is a level of moral dishonesty that goes along with a capable young man like myself collecting welfare, but isn't our political system fueled by moral dishonesty? Where's the application?

#### The Conclusion (sort of)

So where does that leave me? The massive array of possibilities is most of the problem— it's downright overwhelming. You see, the last 16 years of life have been basically scripted out for most middle class suburbanites like myself. We go to school for 12 years, college for 4, then go get a job. I neglected the possibility of grad school for now because I need to decide on a suitable career before I pursue further education on it, unless I want to waste even more money. One thing I do know is that music is such a huge part of my life that I can't really foresee a career not involving it in some aspect (sorry ladies, that sort of cancels out the prostitution thing). I haven't found anything else in life that can make me so happy: Whether it's hearing a new band for the first time, playing a show in front of a bunch of strangers in the middle of Pennsylvania, or being inspired to promote political change by a band like Propagandhi. Maybe I'm really meant to be a journalist/rock critic/freeloader. Sure, the pay sucks and it entails hours in front of a computer screen; but in lieu of my other options it seems like the best choice. By the next issue of LOI maybe I'll be closer to my decision, or maybe I won't; I'm not in a hurry to grow-up. Until then, the next time someone asks me the dreaded "job" question I think I'll just hand him or her a photocopy of this article and walk away. I'm sick of awkward smiles.







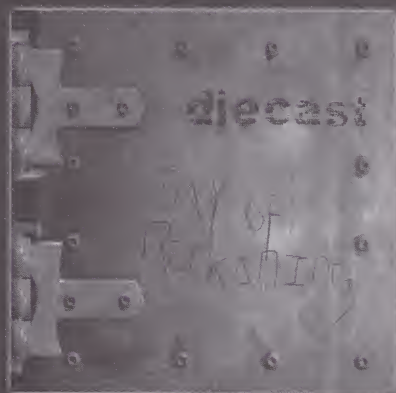
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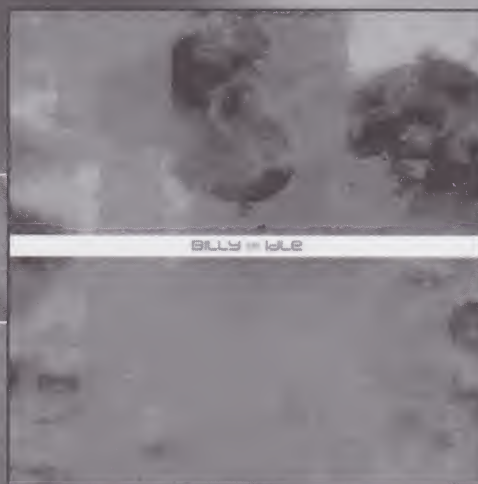
# The Buzz on the Bizz

by Ross

Hey peeps, how's it hanging out there in the real world? In here-- in Rock City-- we've got lots of news for you. It's all interesting. For instance, **Fiddler Records** is set to release a record by a band called **The Seville** featuring ex-members of Florida's the **Vacant Andy's** and **The Agency**.... **Curl up and Die** have left **Status Recordings** and signed to **Revelation**. They're ready to put Reno, NV on the hardcore map after it was torn off during **7 Seconds'** absence.... **Dimitri Minakakis** and **The Dillinger Escape Plan** have parted ways. No word on who will fill the vacant slot (although my vote is either Maynard from Tool or Mike Patton from Faith no More).... **Bad Religion** has not only returned to **Epitaph**, but they have also have called upon the guitar duties of original guitarist and Epitaph founder, Brett Gurewitz. Hopefully their next record will be more like "Suffer" and less like Greg Graffin's solo record.... Believe it or not **Cave-in** has signed to RCA. That's right, the underground's answer to Radiohead. If we're lucky, Steven Brodsky will be the next Geddy Lee.... In case you hadn't heard, **Earth Crisis** is officially no more. Of course they gave that standard press-release that they've gone as far as they can go, but methinks the real reason is more along the lines of "our last record sucked, so no one bought it. I think I'm going to get a day job."... I hear Berkeley's **Black Cat Music** has signed to **Lookout!** and when I recently saw them they fucking rocked!... Kansas City's criminally underrated **Shiner** have parted ways with **O&O Records** after one record and returned to their old home of **Desoto**.... Chapel Hill's **Sorry About Dresden** have signed to **Saddle-Creek**. For the record, I'm not sorry about Dresden.... I'm sure everyone in the world knows this by now, but **At the Drive-in** are taking an extended hiatus-- which they announced in a press-release a few months ago. My question is: does a band that is simply taking time off release a press-release before doing so? Does anyone think there may be more to this then the band is letting on?... **Burn it Down** broke up, which is sad 'cause they were good. But, then their singer, Ryan Downey moved to San Francisco to become the lead singer of **Time in Malta** (Todd from TIM was a founding member of BID), and then TIM parted ways with Ryan-- all in the span of a few weeks. What is als sad is that Ryan moved to Newport Beach CA to start a band that sounds like Coldplay. Dork.... Has anyone else heard the rumor about **Sunny Day Real Estate** breaking up? If this is true, is anyone else happy that they won't be beating a dead horse anymore?... The LOI strikeforce has reported a rumor circulating that **The Dillinger 4** have signed with **Fat Wreck** for an estimated 3 times what **Lookout!** offered the Minneapolis band. It seems that **Lagwagon** records are selling far better than Ted Leo CDs.... Tommy from **Silent Majority** has a new band called **Blood Red** and they fucking rock. Expect a CD out on **Initial** soon.... There is a new **Fugazi** record in the works. Look for it in the fall.... **Negative Progression** recently signed a NJ emotional punk band called the **June Spirit**.... **Law of Inertia Records** just signed an amazing band from North Dakota of all places, called **Billy**. Look for a full length CD out in early 2002. We also have a 6-song EP by Long Island's **The Reunion Show**.... **Saves the Day's** new record, "Stay What you Are," recently entered the Billboard top 200 charts at #100.... Jason from **Kid Dynamite** has a new band called **None More Black**.... In other ex-Kid Dynamite news Drummer Dave Wagenschutz (also ex-Lifetime) is the new drummer for **Good Riddance** and they wanted him so bad that he still lives in Philly and flies out to Santa Cruz for practice and tour.... **The Rocking Horse Winner** have left **OHEV** and have signed with **Equal Vision**. **Bane** and RHW on the same label? Does anyone else find that weird?... Does anyone care that **Drive-Thru** signed **Home Grown**? I didn't think so.... **Burn** are back together. That's right, I guess Orange 9mm wasn't paying the bills so this late-great NYHC band is back. Expect a 7" on **Revelation** and an EP on **Equal Vision** soon.... Jonah of **One Line Drawing** and Norm of **Texas is the Reason** have joined forces in a band called **New End Original**. They have also signed to **Jade Tree**.... **Escape Artist** has signed Conn's **In Pieces**.... **Crank!** has signed a band called **Jupither**.... The rumors are true, **The Promise Ring** and **Rancid** are officially on the same label: **Epitaph**.... **Big Wheel** have signed an instrumental band called the **Cancer Conspiracy**.... **Touch and Go** have signed the amazing band **The Need**. Their next release is sure to be crazy and wonderful.... Can anyone confirm the rumor that the **Locust** have signed to **Lookout**? God, Ben Weasel must be turning over in his grave.... In case you care, DJ Muggs of **Cypress Hill** is now on **Epitaph**. The Lawrence Arms have left **Asian Man** and have signed to **Fat Wreck**....

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## Label Pages

### Dischord Records

**Web Page:** [www.Dischord.com](http://www.Dischord.com)

**The Goods:** Wow, this is a first. In the past I would scour web pages for this section always knowing that I had to write about the page, always looking for juicy features to comment upon, never getting fully immersed in the world that label tried to offer (which probably means they aren't very successful labels in terms of captivation or personality). This time it was different. I checked out Dischord's small, simple home on the web, truly captivated by their accomplishments over the past 20 years. I think that there's definitely a profound respect in the punk community for this label, such that when someone mentions the name of this institution, images of Dupont Circle, the Capitol building, and Adam's Morgan etc. are instantly called to mind. I'm not sure about you, but I almost feel that anything associated with Dischord reserves the kind of punk credibility that perhaps no other single independent music entity can claim. So, their website is unusually simple, but so interesting. This is the first time I think I've been truly impressed with a news page, or had the urge to read almost every thing on their bands page. Hell, I even scrutinized their "distributed labels" roster to the point of eyesore. It's truly incredible how many

amazing records this label has released: Minor Threat, Rites of Spring, the Faith, SOA, Nation of Ulysees, Jawbox, Shudder to Think, Bluetip, Dag Nasty, Gray Matter, and of course Fugazi, it's kind of ridiculous. What do they feed kids in DC that makes them so creative? Is it the water? This page is wonderful.

**Key Selling Point:** The single best label in the entire history of punk rock?

**Best Releases to Date:** I have yet to find a release I don't like.

## Online Stores

### The Hardcore Store

**Web Page:** [www.thehardcorestore.com](http://www.thehardcorestore.com)

**The Goods:** It may be a very risky idea to open a new online independent music store with every other online store going the way of the Passenger Pigeon. But, unlike stores like Saul Goodman, which never really nailed down a niche market or a focus, this store, run by the folks at

Very Distro in Philadelphia, is entirely geared around hardcore (and metalcore). And God bless em. It's about time some place on the net stopped trying to hock Bad Religion or NOFX CDs and started pitching the entire catalog of Trustkill or the entire discography of Shai Hulud. Actually, it's kind of a wonder no one thought of this before. While some may wonder if stores like Insound, Interpunk, and Lumberjack may have stolen all the market share away from stores like this one, The Hardcore Store's sparse design and unbeatable aggro-music selection will surely win them fans all over the US. Unlike Insound, the stuff at The Hardcore Store doesn't often show up in Tower Records. This is one of the only cases I can think of where having an online store is a necessity for this type of music. And, the prices are very reasonable as well. So, swing on over to The Hardcore Store, and while you're there check out something with a bit more bite than that new Radiohead disc.

**Key Selling Point:** The only online store focused on hard

core and metalcore? I think so.

## Misc.

### All Your Base Are Belong to Us

**Web Page:** <http://rmitz.org/AYB3.swf>

**The Goods:** You have my dear college buddy, Gabe, to thank for notifying me of this one. Since watching this 5 minute Flash movie I have done considerable research on it. It seems that this project, inspired by the little known, cheap-as-hell Nintendo video game Zero Wing, began as a few people simply doctoring photos of George Bush billboards and Budweiser ads as a joke. Then, Jeffrey Ray Roberts, a DJ and computer programmer decided to add all the pics he could find of the phenomenon to a catchy faux-techno dance track. The rest, as they say, is history. Everyone in America under the age of 30 knows that geeks rule the web, and it has been a certain trend in the history of great ideas that geeks tend to be the most creative. So, it comes as no surprise that what probably sounded like a really silly idea initially has caught on around the globe in the form on this Flash movie. So, go to the page and check it out. Then set the powers that be up the bomb.

### Xiao Xiao

**Web Page:** <http://richardberg.net/Postings/stickfigh.swf>

**The Goods:** Should I go and make a terribly bold statement like, "this page represents the most imaginative computer animation I've ever seen"? Sure, why not. It is. The 2 minute flash movie is a stick-figure representation of some Jet Li movie that, from what I gather, is pretty much exactly like the fight scene that goes on here. Basically, Jet Li, in the movie, fights the usual band of hired thugs in order to fight the mob boss and save the girl or something. In this animation the entire final fight scene is recreated using stick figures, and it is incredible. I might even make another bold statement like, "this animation is probably much better than the kung-fu depicted in the movie." To think that someone sat down at a computer terminal every day and programmed the movements of every single one of these stick-figures in order to make them realistic is incredible. That might have been the most painstaking process since George Lucas conceived the idea of Jar Jar Binks. Anyways, check this out. It's amazing.

### Yesterday Land

**Web Page:** [www.yesterdayland.com](http://www.yesterdayland.com)

**The Goods:** Did you ever wonder what happened on the last episode of Captain Kangaroo? Did you always want to know who played Murdock on the A-Team? Did you know that the show Charles in Charge had two totally different casts and plot-lines (except for Scott Baio, who played Charles for the duration of the show's run)? Well I did, so when a friend directed me to this site, I was overjoyed. Although the '80s movie section lacks some serious necessities, like most of the Brat Pack movies for instance, it is fun to browse the decades as media selections to see what you remember, and what you had forgotten but had loved so long ago. God, I had almost totally forgotten my love of the first multi-cultural cartoon on Saturday Mornings during the mid-'80s: "The Adventures of Rubic's Cube," in which three Latino kids and their magical alien pal, Rubic, fight crime and do-badders. Or, my love for Duck Tales as I approached puberty. This is a great site. I'm so glad somebody made this damn thing. Now, I just hope they make it a bit more co

mplete.

### DIY Revolution

**Web Page:** [www.diyrevolution.com](http://www.diyrevolution.com)

**The Goods:** I was alerted to the existence of this site by a friend of Jonah's and mine: a sometime activist, DIY crusader, and political punk lover by the name of Jesse. Little did I know how hard at work Jesse and his fellow DIY revolutionaries had been. This is a very fancy site, obviously made with the help of multiple computer database languages and the like, which tries to bring together activists and underground oriented artists, musicians, media moguls, and writers into a larger framework such that they might work together in a broader sense. I've always said that grassroots action should come on a small scale with goals of affecting a larger network of communities and DIY Revolution seems to be doing just this. They have their site split into regions along state lines (sort of), and it seems like they have their heart in the right place. At the time I'm writing this there doesn't seem to be that many postings on the numerous message boards they have, but my dear friend Jesse claims they have gotten 9,000 original hits thus far, so hopefully I simply wasn't looking around hard enough. If you might be wondering about the overt political views of the staff members I really can't help you. From reading the section on the staff members it seems that they all have a devotion towards animal rights, but other than that they seem to be trying to get the users and visitors to form their own political agenda while remaining un-didactic themselves. Good or bad? You be the judge. Oh yeah, just to give my own two cents, I really wish they would have more explicit content on the site. DIY Revolution relies far too heavily on message boards and simple hyperlinks to other sites of interest while remaining relatively light on their own original information. Other than that, this site has tons of potential and helps give credit to my theory that technology will save the world.

### Majestic

**Web Page:** [http://www.ea.com/worlds/games/pw\\_majstc00/hatted\\_mj20\\_age.jsp](http://www.ea.com/worlds/games/pw_majstc00/hatted_mj20_age.jsp)

**The Goods:** Picture this: you sign up for a web-based video adventure game on the internet. You turn off your computer and go to sleep and forget about the whole sign-up process. In the morning you wake up and turn on your computer to check your e-mail and the first thing that pops up at you from the screen when you go online is an instant message with a clue to the aforementioned video game in it. An hour later on your way to work your cell phone rings and you get another clue. Your fax machine, e-mail account and pager aren't safe either. You have entered the world of Majestic, a technological video game experience from Electronic Arts, the same people who bought you all those sports games you play on your Sony Playstation. Now, I didn't bring you to this site to promote pure video game monotony, as I generally feel that video games are stupid and a waste of time. But, this game seems to be different. It relies more on your imagination, and a healthy use of all your e-communications gadgets. To me, this represents what video games will be like in the future, when games like Duke Nukem seem childish and antique. Plus, there's a free trial episode you can use to test out how insanely devoted to technology you really are.



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### Ross Siegel's Top Ten Child Actors I'd Like to Date Today

- 10) The Empress in the Neverending Story (Tami Stronach) / Atreyu (Noah Hathaway)-tie
- 9) The girl in My Girl (Anna Chlumsky)
- 8) Punky Brewster (Soleil Moon-frye)
- 7) Jamie from Charles in Charge (Nicole Eggert)
- 6) Wanda from Doogie Howser (Lisa Dean Ryan)
- 7) Nicole from My Two Dads and Step by Step (Staci Keanan)
- 5) Winnie from the Wonder Years (Danica McKellar)
- 4) Six from Blossom (Jenna von Oy)
- 3) The young mermaid in the movie Splash (Shayla Mackarovich)
- 2) Topanga from Boy Meets World (Danielle Fishel)
- 1) That girl in the movie The Professional, whatshername?

### Lyndsay Siegel's Top Ten Songs Not to Play at Your Wedding

- 10) "Wind Beneath my Wings": Bette Midler
- 9) "Rag Doll": Aerosmith
- 8) "Smack My Bitch Up": Prodigy
- 7) "I Used to Love Her But I Had to Kill Her": Guns'n'Roses
- 6) "Me and a Gun": Tori Amos
- 5) "Girls": Beastie Boys
- 4) "Man-Eater": - Hall & Oates
- 3) "Ball 'n' Chain": Motley Crew
- 2) "Who's Got The Crack?": The Moldy Peaches
- 1) "Me and My Bitch": Notorious B.I.G.

### Jonah Bayer's Top Ten People Not To Get Fashion Advice From

- 10) Cradle of Filth
- 9) Mike Ness (pre-1990)
- 8) That metalhead VJ from M2
- 7) Anyone wearing a wife-beater
- 6) Lars Fredrickson
- 5) Scott Vogel
- 4) The bassist from New Found Glory
- 3) The Locust
- 2) Your parents
- 1) Davey Havok

### Tim Holden's Top Ten Classic Rock Radio Gags

- 10) Two Fer Tuesday (A veritable classic. I feel robbed, however, if the station counts "Heart-breaker" and "Livin' Lovin' Maid" as two songs)
  - 9) "Go Figure" (Very clever. The listener has to figure out what three songs have in common. The winner might even get tickets to see Vanilla Fudge in their only area appearance!)
  - 8) "Instant Request"
  - 7) "Block Party Weekend"
  - 6) "Workforce Block" (Usually a lot of Springsteen is played during these.)
  - 5) "Memorial Day 500" (Not to be confused with its July 4th cousin the "Firecracker 500")
  - 4) "Leftover Lunch"
  - 3) "Desert Island Disks" (My pick: "Windy" - By the Association, "We Built this City" - Starship, and "Incense and Peppermints" by Strawberry Alarm Clock)
  - 2) "Perfect Album Side" (Never listen to one of these if the D.J. has a hard on for Mick Fleetwood)
  - 1) "Get the Led Out"
- \* Every single time they do a top 500 The Eagles' goddamn "Hotel California" breaks the top 5. If anyone can explain why this is please e-mail me at timcholden@hotmail.com.

### Jason Murphy's Top Ten Reasons Why My Top Ten List Has Not Been Printed in the Last Few Issues:

- 10) Sends Top Two lists instead of Ten due to a lack of imagination or humor
- 9) Insists on spelling *your* as *yr*
- 8) Going to a better grad school than Ross
- 7) Claims of being "bigger than Jesus" are unfounded (and unoriginal)
- 6) Constant death threats aimed at Brother's Keeper in unrelated reviews
- 5) Deadline? What's a deadline?
- 4) My hair's not big like Jonah's
- 3) No one can read Sanskrit (I'm trying to lead the comeback)
- 2) Won't get drunk at annual LOL parties and makes wanton monkey love in the copier room
- 1) Enjoys the first Bee Gees records (that's the original sin everyone's talking about, right?)

### Nick Powers' Top Ten Rejected Ideas for this month's Top Ten List

- 10) Top ten reasons Nelly is the future of music.
- 9) Top ten exploitative musical montage pieces of shit heard on corporate radio since September 11th.
- 8) Top ten reality TV moments of 2000-2001 season
- 7) Top ten bad words I wanted to say to Ross each time he bugged me for a top ten list.
- 6) Top ten Tracy Morgan moments of 2000-2001 season (seriously, this guy is underappreciated)
- 5) Top ten recent examples of fervent, violent nationalism that people mistake for patriotism but actually evoke images of pre-WWII Germany.
- 4) All-time top ten pop-punk bands from Mauritania.
- 3) Top ten goopy, cheeky things I've done/said since falling in love for the first time.
- 2) Ten fun facts about Sigur Ros.
- 1) Ten reasons it's impossible to come up with a good top ten list in the week after the shit hits the fan.

### Jon Orren's Top Ten Things Overheard In The Line To See American Pie 2:

- 10) "I hope this is as good as when the crew from 90210 graduated from high school and all went to the same college."
- 9) "I heard this time he fucks a CHERRY pie!"
- 8) "Honey, I forgot my flute. Save my space in line."
- 7) "If you didn't see the first one, you probably won't be able to follow this one."
- 6) "I love movies about getting laid!"
- 5) "I don't understand. How can you make a sequel of a coming of age movie? Don't you only come of age once? Ah screw it, I can't wait to see more adolescent hijinx."
- 4) "My friend Doug knows one of the chicks in this."
- 3) "Bye, Bye, Miss American pie. Drove my..." (gun shots)
- 2) "Is this the line for Rush Hour 2? Oh, whatever. A needless sequel is a needless sequel."
- 1) "What do you want to do when it stops raining."



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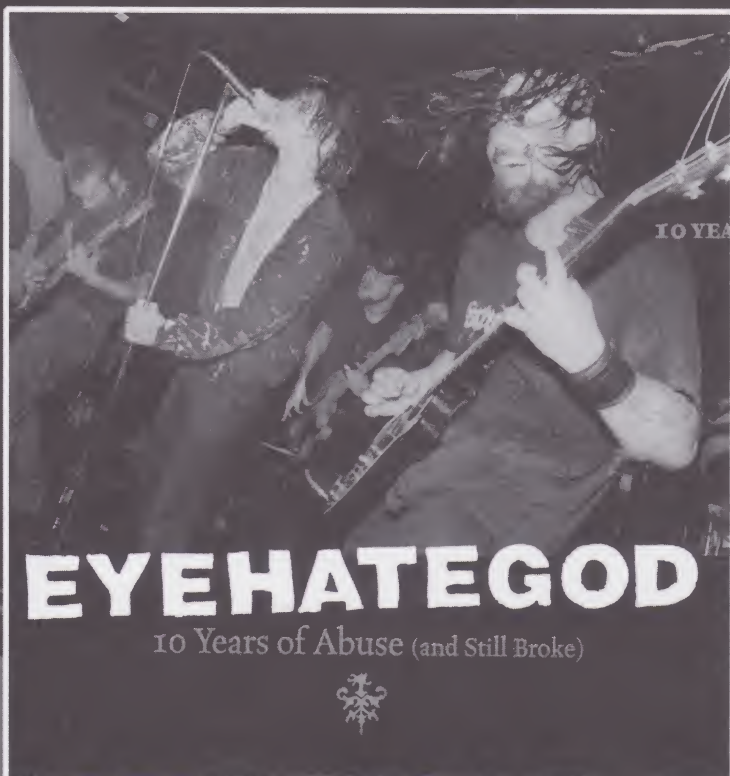


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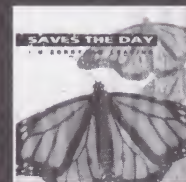
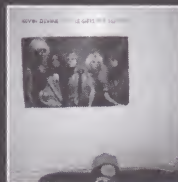
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# The (International) Noise Conspiracy

by Ross







The Swedish punk rock band The (International) Noise Conspiracy is intriguing to say the least. Claiming ex-members of some of Europe's biggest hardcore bands, like the Doughnuts and the great Refused, The (International) Noise Conspiracy instantly piqued the interest of many involved in underground music. Refused were easily one of the most creative bands ever to fall into the hardcore genre. In their music they used such taboo devices as upright basses for jazz breakdowns and sequencers for techno interludes. But, the politics of their singer, Dennis Lyxzen, are what made the band really fascinating. Facing topics such as how art figures into revolution, punk rock complacency, and nail-on-the-head anarchist rhetoric, Refused were one of the most focused and dynamic bands I've ever heard. So, when I found out that Dennis had started a new band-- one that was clearly not hardcore at all-- I was more than excited to see where his next project would take him. When I first heard their last full length on Epitaph, entitled "Survival Sickness," I was definitely surprised. Instead of the frenetic hardcore found on a Refused CD what I found was a mix of soul, garage rock, and punk rock that did as much to make one shake their rump as it did to inspire political activity. I recently saw them in New York City and was of course drawn to their dynamic and fun live show, which was highlighted by the charismatic Lyxzen who shimmied

and boogied his way all over the stage. A casual listener might see the (International) Noise Conspiracy and love the groove, be impressed by their remarkably tasteful and stylish outfits, and be compelled to dance and dance some more. But what really catches the casual listener off guard is when this seemingly straight forward rock band begins to talk about revolution. Who would think that a rock and roll band from Sweden, on Epitaph Records no less, would be promoting societal change? I was more than interested to learn about the formation of this intriguing band out of the ashes of Refused and the Doughnuts, so I met with Dennis back stage for a while. What really impressed me about Dennis is how articulate he is. He has clearly done a lot of thinking about what his band and the music they play mean, and how they figure into the record industry and a network of activism. He is easily one of the most intelligent and thoughtful people I've ever interviewed. Instead of BSing his way through a political interview, he lucidly recognized all the inevitable contradictions and obstacles that a political coalition or rock band faces these days.

**So, who do I have here and what do you do?**

Well, I do plenty of things. For the purpose of this interview I am the singer of the (International) Noise Conspiracy and my name is Dennis. I also play tambourine.

**What else do you do on a daily basis?**

Read books. Right now I'm reading a book by Bob Black called "Sunday Fire." It's a bunch of essays by him—he's a sweet anarchist dude.

**I guess one of the questions I have for you is that I think a lot of the bands who incorporate politics as one of the main things they're trying to get across in their music often times focus far too much on the music and let the politics fall by the wayside, or they focus so much on the politics that the music kind of sucks. Or, they try to balance it out and therefore the music gets watered down and so do the politics. You guys seem to have a really good mix of both and you do it very well. I was wondering what you, as the chief lyric writer, consider to be more important: the artistic merit or the message?**

I don't really see any of those as more important. The whole band is based upon political ideas and the foundation—the way we look and the way we sound—is all based on political ideas. So, the politics are the foundation for us as a band. But, at the same time when we're playing music we really like music and we want to play good music. And, for some reason we're kind of talented at doing that. We just try to add it up and mix it together in a way that feels natural. Maybe the deal is that it's too much of everything and we never toned down the music or the politics. We just go for everything. Too often political bands tend to be part of a certain subculture or a certain scene and we're not interested in fitting into a scene. We're just interested in playing music and mixing this music with the most radical ideas we can.

**So, in trying to get a message across why did you pick music as your medium? Why not painting or speech-giving or something?**

We all started playing music way before we got into politics. I've been into punk rock for I don't know how many years. It's just a natural continuation. When Refused broke up I had a lot of thoughts about: "do I want to get into this again? Do I want to play music again? Is this the best thing that we can do?" Noise Conspiracy started as something we did for fun that we did on the weekends. Then we talked and decided that this would be a great way to further our ideas. If I were to go out and give speeches, maybe twenty people would show up. We thought that if we can do this and if we are as good as we think we are then let's try to use this as much as we can. Sometimes our passion for music takes the upper hand.





Sometimes we're pragmatic and we use this band as we would use a vehicle for revolution. Some days it's just about playing a great show and some days it's more about getting across our views.

**The thing about punk rock is that it tends to be a very youth-oriented movement. So, if you're playing in a band with a message you're getting across your message to a very specific demographic. You're not getting it across to everyone—like older people, younger people, or even people that may not listen to punk rock. Does that bother you at all?**

Yeah it does, but I think that's also why we play the music we play. In comparison to all the bands we used to be in with the Noise Conspiracy we have older people come out. My dad likes us 'cause he used to listen to the Rolling Stones. He never understood Refused.

**I'm sure plenty of people can't understand Refused.**

Exactly. There is nothing difficult about what we're doing. It's not that extreme or anything, we just want to play soulful music. Hopefully that will reach beyond the punk community. It does bother us and that's something we thought of when we started the band. We decided to start a band that everyone can understand and that no one is left out of. Also, we like this kind of music, we all listen to soul and '60s punk rock. I'm not down with the avant garde vision of creating art just for the sake of creating. I just want to play good music.

**Well I think great visual artists—that may have very utilitarian aims—like Courbet or Diego Rivera, weren't trying to create masterpieces that only the wealthy, the educated, or the elite could understand, but rather that everyone could understand and glean meaning from.**

Right, that's what we're trying to do. We want to make good music that is fun and interesting to listen to, but at the same time that music is a vehicle for our message.

**Tell me about the uniforms. Is that an aesthetic thing or is it part of the message too?**

Capitalism and the rock industry are very good at singling out heroes as commodities to sell. You look at icons that rock has produced like John Lennon or Jim Morrison or Kurt Cobain or Marilyn Manson.

**It's funny to think of Marilyn Manson as an icon.** (laughter)

Well, he's probably one of the most, not interesting, but fascinating as far as his background in mass culture. Anyways, in capitalism the leaders of a movement are singled out and when they are gone the movement they helped create crumbles with them. Just look at grunge for instance. (laughter) They personify this whole myth of picking up a guitar and you can make it. Like the American dream of self-realization. We said we don't want to be a part of that. I don't want to be Mick Jagger and if I wear a red scarf then everyone goes out and buys a red scarf because I'm famous and I've sold a lot of records.

**So, when you all wear the exact same outfit is that an emphasis on equality?**

Yes, that's the whole thing. We are showing people that we are a collective. It wouldn't be a band if it wasn't for everybody. We don't ever practice if it's not all five of us and we never make a decision if everyone doesn't agree. We are a collective of five individuals becoming one. With the outfits we want to show people that there are none of us that stand out. It's not my band as the singer, we are all equally important.

**I don't mean this in a critical way but when you guys get up there you look good, you look fashionable. When you dance you look good. It's almost as if you're trying to make revolution fashionable. Is that an unfair interpretation?**

No, it's your perception of it. I think there is nothing worse than when people try to make revolution into a fashion statement. But, even though we want to change the world, we still want to look good. A lot of times I'll come out in my pants and people will be like, "look

at these clowns!" We want to look good on our own terms. We have sharp looking outfits, but they are really just uniforms. We've always been fascinated by the whole idea of an urban guerilla. Leftist and revolutionary politics have been very boring for a long time. It's been very self-sacrificial and self-absorbed. A lot of times when people talk about politics they say, "George Bush just gave us a new budget plan blah blah blah" and it bores the hell out of people. We want to take political ideas and put them in a context where it becomes exciting.

**I hate George Bush, but for some people like myself I read about George Bush's tax-plan and I get excited thinking about it.**

Yeah, but there are few of us. (laughter) We want people to leave our shows thinking, "that whole socialist thing is kind of sweet." A lot of times political bands talk about how fucked up the world is and how bad things are and then you leave the show feeling like shit. We always take the other side of political issues, instead of talking about oppression we talk about resistance.

**You have a glass-is-half-full kind of thing.**

Definitely. We want to be uplifting. We want people to be shocked and surprised into getting active. We don't necessarily want people to think they know everything about anarchism when they leave our shows, we want them to get motivated to go to the library and go check







out some books or start trying to promote change. If one kid leaves our show inspired then it's worth it. Music won't change the world and we know that. A lot of people see us and think that we look nice and play good music and that's all we are at the end of the day. But, political punk rock like Born Against and the Dead Kennedys got me excited and got me wanting to find out more. Maybe we can be that band for some people today.

**You really think music won't change the world? I mean, what about the role that music played in the anti-Vietnam movement or in the American civil rights movements? You don't think music was an essential part of those struggles?**

Music did the same thing as it does now. It inspires people. But, if Bob Dylan couldn't change the world then neither can we. Maybe we are—as you said—trying to sell politics or make it fashionable. That kind of scares us, 'cause we really want this to happen. We're not trying to sell records, we're here because we believe in something bigger than ourselves. Sometimes you find yourself in the compromises you have to take just in order to play music and find your record on store shelves. We know that, we've considered that. Music is such an emotional medium. One of our strong points is that we go out there and have a good time and dance and boogie and then when we start talking about politics it's almost too late. People have already let down their guard, and then they hear us speak and hopefully since we've gotten them interested, they will then take it a step further and think about what we're saying.

**I didn't mean you're making revolution trendy. I meant that you're making revolution cool.**

Yeah, and if it is trendy or cool to be knowledgeable and informed then I'm all for it.

**But then there's the reciprocal which is: when it's not trendy do people drop it and move on?**

Oh totally, that's the problem we face. Hopefully a lot of people will take that with them and see beyond the cool slogans and think that this actually means something.

**It's interesting, though. I absolutely love Propagandhi, but those guys tend to have a very negative stance. They do talk about how fucked up the world is and kind of get you bummed in the process— even though they are more intelligent than almost every other band out there. But, you guys are simply the other side of a complete equation. You guys look good and try to be positive while they talk about the world's problems and look like they just crawled out of their van when they get up there on stage.**

I think we need everything. That is what can become powerful in music. There are bands like us and bands like Propagandhi and then there's bands like Catharsis where it's really diehard and DIY. I think we all compliment each other in a good way, especially since all of us combined cover a lot of ground musically. Not everybody can play at the Bowery Ballroom. Maybe some bands should play at CBGB's or ABC No Rio or maybe some bands should play at Carnegie Hall. It's bad when it becomes a competition—hence our fight against capitalism. I wish all the bands that fall into the same category as us can play big shows, but maybe that can happen in the future when people get more open minded. It is fine if there are bands like Catharsis that fit a certain scene because that is grass-roots and on a smaller level, which is definitely necessary. But, we're trying to get those other kids that don't listen to metal and maybe don't listen to bigger bands like Rage Against the Machine. I think the best part about the Noise Conspiracy is that we can really appeal to anyone—even people who know nothing about the underground. There is a need for Rage Against the Machine as well. Even if that band seems to have a watered down message because they're on a certain label. But, how many kids found out about Mumia or Leonard Peltier because of them? If I turn on the TV I'd be really excited

to see them even if maybe they aren't the greatest band in the world.

**Well, I have their first record and I think it's fantastic.**

I have all their albums actually. I'd rather see them or Ani DiFranco or Primal Scream than Britney Spears. I can relate to what they're saying. Even if I can't relate to them since they're on a huge record label, I can relate to what they might be saying. I can't relate to guys who get themselves excited before a game screaming "fuck you I won't do what you tell me" but when I see Rage Against the Machine it's refreshing to see someone that thinks the way I do.

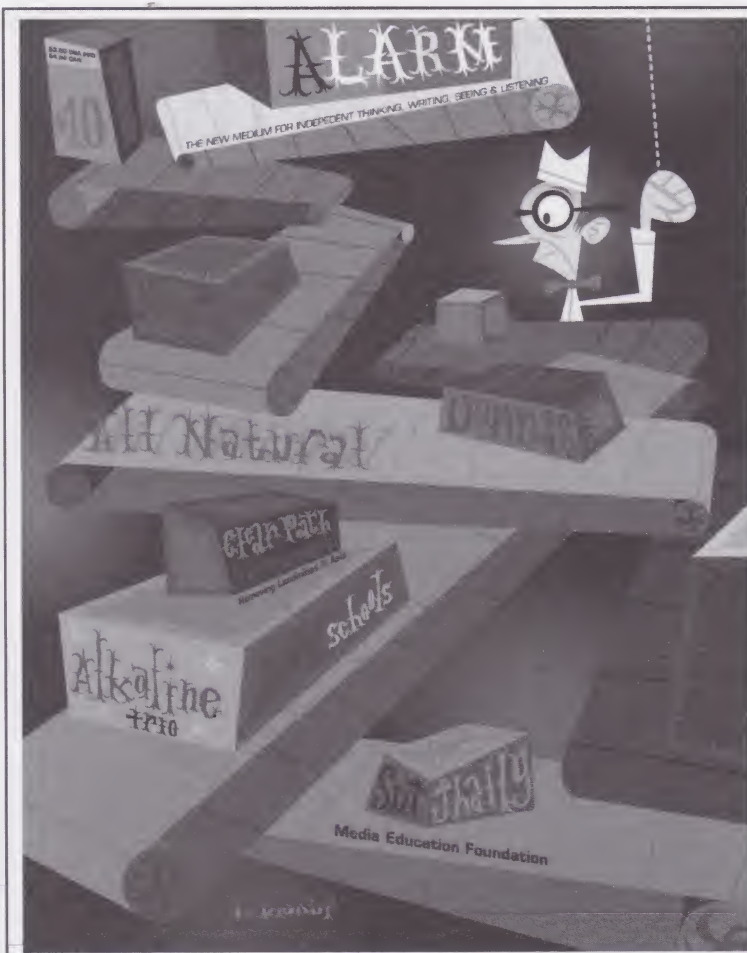
**But the problem is that these days American mainstream music, and even punk, is so unthreatening.**

Yup, every band that has a distorted guitar and a tattoo on their arm can call themselves a punk band. Just look at any of those new metal bands. They're just horrible, they have very little substance, and they don't say shit. If anyone asks what the antithesis of our band is, it's not necessarily a band that does not directly confront the problems in changing society, but rather a band that doesn't say anything at all. And, say what you will, we are not and never will be that type of band or those type of people.

**Photos by Ross**







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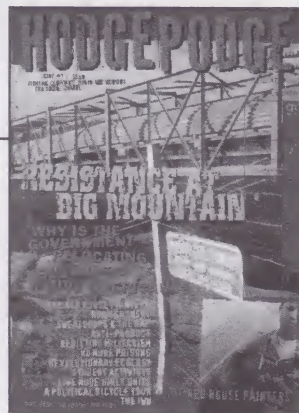
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zero zero

by ROSS





Like many ex-Lifetime fans, I was excited ever since I heard that Ari and Dave, the singer and one of the guitarists of that great New Jersey punk outfit, had started a new band. I had seen Lifetime guitarist Dan Yemin's band Kid Dynamite rise and fall, and couldn't wait to see what would come from man who possessed arguably the best voice in punk rock in the '90s. I received a press-release a short time later describing the band, saying they sounded something like Stereolab. Now, I've always liked Stereolab, but how could the guy who penned the great songs, "The Gym is Neutral Territory" or "Rodeo" start a band that sounded like Stereolab? What kind of ridiculous, pretentious departure would that be? Nonetheless I was intrigued. So, when I got *AM Gold*, the band's debut disc on Jade Tree, I eagerly popped it into the stereo awaiting French vocals and airy drum-loops. What I got was something original, unusual, and definitely more like French experimental dance music than Lifetime. The record is song after song of simple and catchy drum machine beats under samples, keyboards, and a montage of other sonic landscapes. It was beautiful and it made me want to dance. So, I decided I wanted to find out more about this new band that contained members of one of my all time favorite bands, as well as Tannis, the band's organist extraordinaire. I took the train out to Jersey one afternoon and ate Greek food with the band while smoking cigarettes and laughing about all the people that copied Lifetime (though not nearly as well as the original). While this interview may seem a bit heavy and the members may seem a bit arrogant, I assure you that not only did I have a great time getting to know the members of this wonderful band, but that Zero Zero's music can back-up their bold words. They are original, they are interesting, and they do experiment to a mostly successful degree. This record even prompted a publicist friend of mine to quip: "The Zero Zero record is a record I wish I could pitch to magazines, because it would be something I actually truly loved instead of something I'm paid to talk nice about." That's how I feel about *AM Gold*, and you'll find in the interview that everything this band does comes from the heart.

**Who are you and what do you do in the band?**

**Ari:** We are Zero Zero, I'm Ari and I sing.

**Tannis:** I'm Tannis, I'm in Zero Zero, and I play organs and synthesizers and I sing sometimes.

**Tannis, where did your name come from? Were your parents hippies?**

**Tannis:** Well, I'm named after my father's sister and he was a little bit of a hippie in that he was really into the music scene in San Francisco when it was going on. The 30-second story is that when my family originally came over to America a million years ago, there was a Native American tribe called **\*\*Creets\*\***. Tannis is a name that Cree fathers call their daughters as a term of endearment. So, they adopted the name from the Crees.

**Wow, that's a really good story. (laughter) Much more impressive than my name. Okay, first question: is punk rock boring?**

**Tannis:** Punk rock to me is so vague of a term. I still listen to a lot of bands that would be considered punk rock but it's mostly older stuff. I think it's very important—punk rock, that is—but there have been a whole rash of punk bands that suck these days. As it becomes more and more of a trend it gets more and more boring as any trend does.

**Ari:** Yeah, I agree. I guess the current state of punk rock is boring and tired. I think bands today need to branch out as most of the bands that started punk rock were doing. No one ever said that it should sound a certain way and be a certain thing. All the founding fathers of punk rock, none of them stayed playing one thing the whole time.

**Tannis:** Like the Talking Heads, they used to play CB's, they used to be punk—and they were. But, you don't think of them being punk.

**The Go-Gos used to be punk.**

**Ari:** Right, or the B52's.

**Tannis:** For tons of bands it was more about an attitude and a brand new scene coming out of something in a reaction. It started as a backlash and because it was new and fresh and original it was great.

**To revise that, do you think punk is boring today?**

**Ari and Tannis:** Definitely.

**Tannis:** There's too much. There are too many bands that are doing the same thing or similar things and in this day and age everything is do-it-yourself, which is good and bad. I think it's bad because since anyone can do it—since anyone can put out a record or tour—that it isn't as novel or as relevant as it once was.

**Ari:** There's too many bands, there's too many labels, there's even too many shows. It gets to the point where kids don't even go to most shows because they know another show will be right around the corner. There's nothing special about it anymore since there's too much competition and because of that not many bands these days put out truly great records. There's definitely exceptions, but on the whole the state of punk rock is sad and boring.

**So, what do we do? Is it a lost cause?**

**Ari:** I think people really have to get excited about music. Punk rock isn't just an ideology it's also a musical form. It amazes me how kids aren't as unexcited and not curious as they are about music in general. Punk needs to go through a next evolution, like a backlash. They need to spend more time writing so they can make great records, instead of worrying about how many people they're going to draw and formulas that labels have.



Maybe it is about the ideology, then. Maybe bands need to start being different and taking that as the prime punk ideology.

**Ari:** True, and they're definitely not different. What's different about Blink 182 or Saves the Day or whoever? They're just faster pop bands with distorted guitars. I really think that music and records and bands should be about getting to the next level, whatever that level may be. It shouldn't be about putting out the same record over and over on the same labels with the same covers. I really think people need to start taking themselves seriously as musicians, and I don't understand how bands put out the same record over and over again.

**Tannis:** I agree. I think bands just want to be successful and they are willing to go through all the motions in order to achieve that success. They don't go through those motions, like signing to certain labels or playing certain styles, for any good reason other than that people tend to be robots and bands follow that formula. Most bands do stuff because they think it's what they're supposed to do.

**Here's a hypothetical situation: you know a kid who isn't anything extraordinary, he's not an exceptional guy in any way. He just is a kid who goes to shows and loves the music and he just loves rocking out. And he says to you, "Do I start a band just to play because I love music? Or do I not do anything because anything I would do wouldn't be extraordinary?"**

**Ari:** See, the beauty of punk rock is that it's music that will and can inspire you to play even if you don't have any musical training. When I used to listen to punk records when I was younger I used to say, "I could do that." And that's what made me want to get out there and start a band. And, that's great I think. But, to me it's very important that I look back at my life and my musical career and know that every little phase I was in I was trying to do something different and push myself, and any little scene I was in, forward. I think it takes a certain level of maturity, for lack of a better word, to be able to get to that point. You can stumble on your instrument for years before you actually become good at it and are able to achieve the kind of sound you want to. But, once you're at that level you owe it to yourself and the world to take it seriously. I think people don't take it seriously enough and that is the problem. I imagine a lot of bands think music is just fun, that it's just something to do. But music is serious to me.

**I think that's a cop-out to say that music should only be for fun.**

**Tannis:** It's an extension of yourself.

**Ari:** It's a religion. People play music and some of them like me can never not play music... ever. It's everyone's responsibility for the good of the world in general. If you're in a pop-punk band be a good pop-punk band.

**Tannis:** And maybe have your own pop-punk sound.

**Ari:** I think everyone in our band feels the same devotion and seriousness towards music, because that is how we best express ourselves.

**Just to play devil's advocate, you, Ari, were in a band that in the punk world was very successful. It's not like you were 18 and your band went nowhere and then you decided to get a real job. Your job for a while was playing music so you've had a lot of time to focus on music very directly. You had time to experiment and make it the focus of your life, whereas most people do not have that luxury.**

**Ari:** Yeah, but I don't know if just because I toured a lot and made records with Lifetime makes me exceptional. I think a good majority of the people out there who play music devote a lot of time and energy into playing—even if it's by themselves in their bedroom. I think it's all about sacrifice. It's expensive, it's time consuming: it's a commitment. Even when I was 16 or 17 I still had the same philosophy towards making music my life. When Lifetime did what we did, nobody liked us. They thought we weren't hardcore enough or whatever. We were just interested in getting better and making our own sound more than making big and getting accepted. [Dave sits down and joins the discussion]

**So, how does your view of what music and punk mean and why they're important figure into the vision you have for Zero Zero?**

**Dave:** I think one thing we wanted to do was capture the same kind of energy we felt when we were 18 and 19 where getting guitars and amps was a new thing, an exciting thing. But, we're 28 and guitars and amps and things like that have kind of lost their excitement. I wanted to be excited about making music after Lifetime, and I was really really bored by the conventional approach. So, I started buying drum machines and samplers and started getting into that kind of thing. I locked myself in my room and did that for a long time. At the same time Ari was thinking the same thing I was—that punk was stale and we needed to move past what we did in Lifetime. Zero Zero was kind of an attempt to resolve that sentiment.

**So, is Zero Zero punk?**

**Dave:** Very. Everything we do, our approach to music, hasn't changed from when we were 17. I think the most punk thing about Zero Zero

is that we don't have tons of money to spend on sequencers or equipment. Similarly, we don't know what we're doing, we're making it up as we go along and we're teaching ourselves as we go along. We're trying and we're pushing everything we can do.

**Tannis:** It all comes from the heart. We don't really know going into a practice or a recording session what's going to come out, we just do what we feel. It just kind of comes out.

**Do you think people that are obviously not punk, like Britney Spears, are playing from the heart?**

**Ari:** She might be, but I think there has to be an emphasis put on music and history. Whatever she's doing she might be genuine, but she's not breaking any rules. She'll be remembered....

**Tannis:** But, she'll be remembered for what other people pictured her as and what other people made her out to be rather than things she did on her own. It's not a product of her as a person. Someone else is getting paid to tell her how to dance or how to look.

**Dave:** All those producers who make pop music and are doing really cool things—even if those things are used in circumstantial ways—are people who have come from our background. They got really good at it busting their asses like us.

**I don't know if you saw it, but I did an interview with Adrock of the Beastie Boys for a side project he has called BS2000. The Beastie Boys are obviously a huge band that sells ridiculous amounts of albums, and he said that when they go into a studio to record they don't go to fancy studios, but they go into a basement with a bunch of friends for a few months. Do you see that as the way you would want to make music?**

**Ari:** Well, I don't see us as ever being as successful as the Beastie Boys. For now we're very comfortable





being in our own place because we're not bound to an hourly rate. It's just us three doing what we want to do. The reason why I think we were able to do what we did on "AM Gold" was because we worked just by ourselves and we didn't have to think about how much money it was costing or what anybody else would think about it. I like the Beastie Boys' attitude if it's true what you say. I think the only way to truly let yourself go is to be with people you love and trust and be in a place you love. Punk rock and hardcore just doesn't sound good when it's produced. I think going into a fancy studio is motivated by labels and press sheets, it really has no factor in what it's going to sound like.

**Do you care what people think?**

**Dave:** People, yeah. We mixed the record with our friends James and Tim, who we have a lot of respect for. They are people who I really care what they think and how they react. Other people who are doing things that I really respect, yes, of course I care what they think. But, if your average show-goer thinks our record sucks or it sounds more like the music in the rave across town than it does like Lifetime, then that I don't care about.

**But, with Lifetime if you didn't sell records you probably wouldn't be crushed, but at the same time it would have made living harder since that was where you got your money.**

**Ari:** You can't let what other people think about your work shape your opinion of yourself. Especially in Lifetime where I think we felt it too much. We reacted too much to what people thought, at the end.

**Dave:** The last record was constant debates in every song about, "how will these kids react, or these kids?" For the Zero Zero record we just wanted to be high and stay on our own level and make music that we loved rather than what the hardcore scene would love.

**Ari:** Putting out your first record is just the best because no one cares, no one is even expecting it. No one will take notice if the record sucks. I am pretty confident that we will blow the first record away when we do more stuff, but I think that's because we don't really have any ties now. We almost never go to hardcore or punk shows, we really don't care what our friends think, we just want to make music.

**Tannis:** Well, you have to care a little bit. One thing I hate when bands do is when they pretend they don't care what anyone else thinks, because that's bullshit. If you didn't care you wouldn't record it and sell it. Since you did record it and sell it it means you want to make money so you can keep doing what you're doing which is making music. Of course, when you're done of course you want people to like it. Anyone who says they absolutely could care less if anyone likes their music is full of shit or is making terrible music.

**I imagine that initially the people who come to see you and buy your record are going to be those that say, "dude, two guys from Lifetime, I want to get this!" They're going to buy the record and a few of them are going to totally love it but probably a lot of them will fucking hate it. Does that bother you?**

**Ari:** No, it's like when Jets to Brazil came out, people bought it and people decided whether or not they liked it, and some were very disappointed. That's definitely going to happen and I'm sure it already has happened to us, but I always felt very confident from the beginning, I always thought people were going to respect us for doing something different whether or not they liked it. We didn't have any fans or any particular scene in mind when we wrote that record. We just wanted to try something different.



**Would it bum you out that maybe the hardcore kids would abandon you while maybe indie or even rave kids would love you?**

**Zero Zero:** Nope.

**Ari:** As Tannis said, she's right, we obviously want some people to like us, at the very least so we can keep doing what we're doing and get better. But, we don't care if we're confined to a scene or if we're playing huge festivals in Canada or anything.

**Dave:** When I was in Lifetime I wasn't buying anything, and I missed the whole jungle and drum and bass revolution in music. Then I found out about that stuff and it blew me away. It made me feel like there was something different that had so many possibilities out there. And, I think that's how we all feel about this band. This band more than anything is an experiment, just one that we hope to keep doing for a while.

**Do you guys listen to electronic music, other than Dave 'cause it sounds like you do.**

**Tannis:** Well, we didn't start out as an electronic band. We started out as a real band with a bunch of different members. We had so many line-up changes and so little progress that when it finally came down to the three of us and we all just clicked we decided to keep it.

**Ari:** I really don't know that much about electronic music even now after we made a whole record using sampling, turntables, synths, drums machines and shit like that. I really wasn't even into it before we finally wrote one song as the three of us together and I was like, "wow, this is really petty good!" I'm starting to open up a bit 'cause before I was really stuck in listening to the same music I've been listening to since I was a kid.

**Tannis:** I like a lot of stuff. Obviously I like Stereolab and stuff like Air. And, I think we're all into the type of stuff Radiohead does with electronic instruments and computers. But, I really think it was when Dave started experimenting, as he said, and we finally got Pro-Tools and could put everything together--er that I felt like I really understood the music. And, even now I still don't feel like I fully understand what is going on out there, but that's what is fun about this. We're learning as we go and we hope to get better of course.


**Dave:** Yeah, I've been listening to drum and bass and jungle for a while now, as I said. It just seems a bit fresher than hardcore to me right now. That doesn't mean I don't throw in those old records I have anymore 'cause I do. But, I've done the hardcore thing, we've done the punk thing. It's not necessarily old to us, but it sure isn't new anymore. What is music-- what is art-- if you don't keep on pushing yourself to keep up with the times?

**And the success of Zero Zero, in my opinion, is that you have a really original sound. You don't rip-off anyone directly, but more like take some ideas and mess them up and make them your own.**

**Ari:** Well, that's all that we can hope. That makes this whole conversation right, then. If we are furthering ourselves, and maybe even bringing a new idea or another idea to the kids we play for who probably haven't heard stuff like ours before, then we are doing something that we will be proud of. As long as you can see that the music is coming from people and not just coming from a black, plastic box, then it's all we could hope for.

**Photos by Ross**





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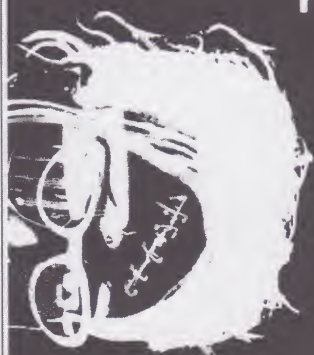
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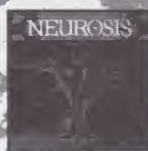


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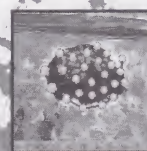
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# Anti-Flag

by Jonah



When Pat says that Anti-Flag is a band that "creates problems," he isn't kidding. I saw him ask the crowd not to smoke, find a flyer outside of the club saying that Anti-Flag ripped off another promoter for 450 dollars, and heard kids calling them 'corporate punks'... before they even hit the stage. Their *Fat Wreck Chords* debut, "Underground Network" is by far their smartest and most focused record to date. Their wholly political lyrics finally rival their catchy punk hooks, taking their music to a new level of proficiency. Aside from the band's own lyrics, "Underground Network," contains contributions from Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, as well as a list of other educational resources. At a time when political messages in punk rock are largely out-of-fashion, it was refreshing to do an interview with a punk band and not talk about their music at all. So read on, you might even learn something.

**Let's start out by introducing yourself and telling me the last book you read.**

I'm Pat. I play drums in Anti-Flag. It's funny, the last book I read was *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. I love that book. Actually it's tragic, I have dyslexia, so I don't read as much as I should.

**Do you have a lot of problems on tour, like what you just had to do? (Pat got up on stage before the show and requested that everyone in the audience smoke outside due to AF's singer/guitarist Justin Sane's asthma.)**

Yeah, we are a band that creates problems. We're very picky about what we do and about how we do our thing. We have beliefs that we strongly hold onto, and if you have beliefs, a lot of times people don't want to accept them or want to battle you on them. We've made our whole lives about having problems. We try to find common ground, and if everybody is trying to find solutions, then we can always work something out.

**Are people usually receptive about the no-smoking requests?**

No, usually they're pissed off. People are addicted to cigarettes, and Phillip Morris has made millions of dollars on making people addicted to them. Me saying, "you can't do it," is like telling a heroin addict he can't do heroin. It's not an easy thing. But we're trying to have a dialogue about it and say, "Maybe cigarette smoking isn't good. Maybe we should try to have a show without cigarette smoke." It's a novel idea...wow.

**On a different note, do you think nationalism is equally as detrimental as fascism?**

Well I think they go hand in hand, definitely. I think that you can't be a fascist unless you have something to say like, "This is us and this is them, and we are better than them, and we are going to use power and force to make us better than them." Nationalism fits right into that. There's also racism involved in fascist beliefs and other things, but I think nationalism is as big of an issue as anything else is.

**Is that what you're referring to in the song "This Machine Kills Fascists," when you say, "You don't have to be a racist to be a Nazi fuck?"**

Yeah, it's true. Germany and the fascist regimes have been nationalist

just as much as they've been racist. Recently, in the punk rock scene, the nationalist skinheads are just as big of morons as the Nazi skinheads are— it's not any different. Anytime you use violence and intimidation you're just a moron.

**Lyricaly the first two albums seemed to deal with more inner-scene issues with songs like "Drunk Punk" or "Summer Squatter," while this time around you seem to be focusing more on the 'bigger picture.' Is that an accurate assessment?**

Yeah, I think so. With this record we thought that there were bigger battles to be fighting. Those songs are still a big part of what we do and are as relevant today as they were when we wrote the songs, but this time we decided to write songs about something bigger.

**Did you have these views all along? Was there any specific turning point for you as a band?**

No, we've always been in the same vein. Even on "Die for the Government," there were songs that dealt with stupid kids in the punk rock community, and then there's also songs like "Die for Your Government," which is a bigger picture song. Maybe on next record we'll have a lot of songs about stupid kids and shows. I don't know, we'll see what happens when we write it.

**I was really interested in how you approached Howard Zinn to write a commentary for the song "Panama Deception."**

You know what, Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky are like the rest of us. They're trying to make a statement and influence people in a positive way. So we said to them, "We have with a record that we're putting out which is going to reach a bunch of people and hopefully some of them will be able to take on some of your ideas." And they were like "Yeah, that's great." We're both trying to do the same thing. These are amazingly intelligent, well-versed people, but we're all trying to reach people and get a message out.

**Do you think—as Howard Zinn and has said—that George W. Bush is a puppet for the corporate elite?**

Clearly. Look at the energy policy that him and Dick Cheney have come up with, getting rid of the Kyoto agreement— what a bunch of crap that is. Any moron knows that industry is affecting climate change, and Bush is like "we're going to research that?" What that means is that we're going to pump more money into business so we can make more money.

**Isn't the United States one of only two nations**





that didn't agree to Kyoto?

(laughter) It's embarrassing. I spent some time in Europe and people are like, "You elected this guy?" It's not my fault! I tried my best.

**So you all vote?**

Yes

**There's also a line in the song "Panama Deception" that seemed a bit uncharacteristic of your goals. It said, "I wish that I could help you to see through the lies, but you're so fucking brainwashed, would it even help to try?"**

That was an example of frustration. Sometimes the frustration comes across more than the optimism.

**But if you really believed that, wouldn't you stop doing this band all together?**

Yes. But the other time we brought up the smoking issue, we had ten kids come up front and blow smoke at us. And you get to the point where you say, "What the fuck is this all about? Why are these people so dumb and brainwashed?" They're not dumb...they're brainwashed. And it's so frustrating, you can't even try anymore because these people are not listening to any reason.

**But aside from that small minority, don't you think that in a sense you're preaching to the converted? For the most part aren't you stating your beliefs in an environment where obviously most of the kids will agree with you?**

Okay, there's two ways of looking at this: there's preaching to the converted and there's inspiring the passionate—and many times I think that what we do is hopefully inspire. I go to shows, and I hear (International) Noise Conspiracy talk about things I'm like, "Yeah, that's right! There's other people that believe in what I believe in, let's go and try to make some positive change!" And hopefully there's a kid out there who gets the same type of feeling out of it when we do a show. But at the same time, there are some young people who haven't formed their opinions of what is right and wrong. Lots of times I wear a pink triangle and a lot of kids don't know what a pink triangle represents the history of it. So I don't think that we're always preaching to converted, I hope we're taking it a step further than that.

**It seems that politics have been downplayed in punk rock as of late. You mentioned The (International) Noise Conspiracy, and obviously your labelmates Propagandhi, but it seems like there aren't any influx of political punk bands anymore.**

Politics are out of fashion right now. Fashion comes and goes. We've been doing this for a while and we're continuing to do it because it's what we know how to do.

**I know one of your major stances is towards anti-violence. I'm sure you saw all the violence at the FTAA protests in Quebec and similar protests. Do you believe there is any cause worth physically fighting for? Do you believe in self-defense?**

Um...no, I get beat up a lot (laughter). It's a very difficult thing. I try to be a pacifist to as much of an extent as I can possibly do it. The rest of the guys are much more like, "Fuck that dude, he needs to get his ass beat." We are all struggling with those issues. That's been an issue since day one in society, whether some people need to use violence as a weapon or you don't. I'm

under the belief that you don't, but maybe I'll be dead (laughter).

**So you guys are straight edge and...**

Why aren't there any more straight-edge kids? What happened to all the straight-edge kids? When I was a kid everybody was straight-edge!

**I don't know, I guess it's something else that goes out of fashion.**

Yeah, exactly.

**Do you think that straight edge is necessary for revolution?**

I used to think that, but now if somebody wants to have a glass of wine with dinner, I don't think that they're any less of a revolutionary than someone who doesn't have a glass of wine with dinner. Again, if you're a moron and you're loaded all the time and addicted to substances you can't function in a coherent way. However, if you can function in a coherent way and you're loaded all the time, hey great...I don't care.

**Isn't being straight-edge hard in the 'street punk scene.' At least the hardcore scene has an entire faction dedicated to this lifestyle. Do you feel like outsiders, especially since notorious drug users like Sid Vicious and Darby Crash helped build the punk movement?**

We've been outside of everything our whole lives. We've always been the fuck-ups and the kids who were punk rock and weren't drunk at the parties, or punk rock but didn't want kids to smoke at a show, or punk rock but not singing about girls and sex and beer. We've always been misfits. We're not cool, we can't help it.

**You guys have a song called "Indie Sucks, Hardline Sucks, Emo Sucks." This is predominantly an emo/indie zine, and while I took it as a joke, I wanted to hear your explanation.**

It's a joke. We had a suitcase we got at the goodwill, that we carried our seven-inches in when we were really young. So nobody would steal the suitcase I wrote "indie sucks, emo sucks, punk rock sucks, fuck you," all this obnoxious stuff on it. Justin thought it was funny and we turned it into a song. If you can't laugh at yourself or if anybody takes offense to it...fuck you (laughter).

**In the song "Underground Network" you talk about the national media's coverage of the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal. More recently the media has focused on Bush's daughters, who drank a beer and made the cover of every magazine. What do you think the public's fascination with these stupid issues and why doesn't the public care more important issues that are going to directly effect them?**

There are people who have studied for years and years to figure out how to make these things happen. Politicians have enough money to pay these people to use these types of things to their advantage. If there is a problem with the president, or someone gets in trouble, the big press conference is always Friday afternoon because they know they've got two days of dead time over the weekend—before the newspapers come out with the real news on Monday. "Wag the Dog" is a perfect example of this type of thing. In many ways it's tragic that we buy into all this stuff, but we've been bred our whole lives to buy into this stuff and we've been trained. Part of the media is to train the people and part of the media is to entertain the people.

**I was wondering who some of your influences were politically.**

**I know you wrote a song "This Machine Kills Fascists," which is obviously a Woody Guthrie tribute.**

**Who else inspires you?**







It's funny, we live in a very different time than Woody Guthrie. He was a complete womanizer and a sexist pig and we have trouble now because we're trying not to— and hopefully succeeding—in not being sexist pigs and treating women like equals. So to take Woody Guthrie—who has all these political messages standing up for all these issues —and then treated women like shit is that dichotomy, and that's a problem. My dad is a right-wing conservative but we've always discussed politics and he always told me that as long as you can back up your argument with ideas that are coherent, I don't care what argument you have. So we would always sit around and discuss politics. I remember one time I called him a 'communist fascist' when I was fifteen, and he was like, "Ok, first of all it's very unlikely for you to be a communist and a fascist because they were opposing forces, and this is the history behind communism, and this is the history behind fascism." Justin's parents and siblings were influential. Justin's dad is Irish, right off the boat, and he was dealing with the British occupation of Northern Ireland and things like that. So they've always been a political family.

**Speaking of political parties, I read that you were more of a socialist than an anarchist.**

Speaking for myself, I'm definitely more of a socialist than an anarchist. When you talk about anarchy you have to talk about whether you're talking about 'punk rock' anarchy, or 'Locke and Hobbes' anarchy, or 'Karl Marx' anarchy. We're definitely of the belief that we need to have people working for the common good of all people— that's just common sense. Anarchy without a government where we'll all be working for the common good... I don't think our society is ready for that right now. I think a good step would be to go to a socialist society and then if we can go to an anarchist society, I'm all in favor.

**Well it also depends on what you mean by Socialism. They had socialism in China...**

That's like saying the U.S. is a democracy. Socialism in China is socialism but it's not socialism in the way I want it to be.

**Okay so what would the ideal set-up be?**

The ideal set-up would be that there aren't the extremes of wealth distribution, everybody would have access to the same resources. Obviously you're going to have some people that are better at making a pot or at teaching kids, but as long as everyone has

the same resources, that would be ideal. In different countries there's a lot less disparity between the wealthy and poor and there's not this 'I-need-to-get-this-or-I'm-not-a-human-being,' attitude. People are more accepting of what they have and more happy with the people around them. All we're looking for is everyone to have a fair chance to have a good time.

**Obviously something needs to be done about corporations in this country, but I know some kids who will go to Wal-Mart and throw things off the shelves. Isn't that just disparaging the shit workers, not the CEOs?**

Yeah, well obviously it's much more effective to have people boycott Wal-Mart and make a public outcry for a boycotting of that company, rather than going in and ripping things off the shelves. However, in people doing that, it calls attention to people's frustrations with the company and brings it into the news. People say, "Joe Schmo was arrested for ripping the Wal-Mart sign off the front of the building, why did he do that?" So that brings people to the awareness that there are fucked up things going on at Wal-Mart, and it's just the shop at the end of the block that's not hurting anybody or doing evil things. So in that sense I think there's value to it. I don't encourage it but I think there's value to it.

**That's almost like saying that if you agree to work at Wal-Mart you're accepting responsibility for everything they do.**

Yeah, but it's not that easy. For some people there's not another place to work. You can't get on people and tear them down for the choices they need to make. But you want to supply them with information so hopefully they'll find other options.

**Is there anything else you want to add?**

Let me just give you our post office box if people want to get in touch with us. Our web address is [www.anti-flag.com](http://www.anti-flag.com) and our Post office box is PO BOX 71266 Pittsburgh, PA 15213. On our website we also have links to organizations and places where you can find much more intelligent, much more informed people than ourselves who can give you information on some of these issues if you are interested in them.

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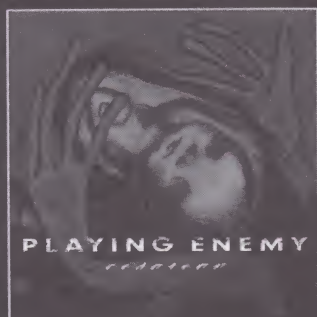
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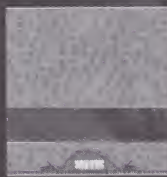
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MENT

# INSTRUCTING OUR FUTURE

## SCUMPIG ON THE SCUMPIG

by Jacob Futernick





Besides leaving out my name as the author of last issue's "Infiltrating the Evil Empire" article [see issue #9], something else was also missing, the now infamous transcript of my final conversation with the Starbucks management. I took the job at Starbucks for a number of reasons, most of all, to critique Starbucks from an insider's perspective. Anybody can say, "Oh I hate Starbucks because they put my favorite coffee shop out of business," or "I hate Starbucks because they pay workers in Costa Rica 8 and a half cents for a cup of coffee they charge 3 dollars for," or "I hate Starbucks because I used to have friends but now they all work at Starbucks," and so forth and so on. In my article, I tried to go above and beyond these simple clichés to provide something more interesting than simple Starbucks-bashing. For whatever reason, (corporate brainwashing, common decency for my fellow man, simple cowardice...) for the majority of my Starbucks career I was a seemingly upstanding employee. While I secretly took notes at meetings and plotted my eventual uprising, it was not until my final day at Starbucks did I let my true feelings shine through. In a drunken haze, my final night left me banished from my former store with a nagging feeling I had failed in my goal of wreaking true havoc. My Starbucks experience lacked closure. Two days later I got just what I needed. Below is a transcript of a phone call made shortly after the events detailed in my article in the last issue of Law of Inertia:

Hello.

Hi is Robin there?

Who's calling?

This is Jacob.

OK just a moment.

Hello.

Hello Robin.

Jake.

Yes.

Could you explain to me what happened last night?

As in what?

As in I get a phone call from Tai saying you had brought alcohol into the store, that you were drunk.

Yeah, well, it might have been true.

Yes or no.

Yes, it was true.

OK, the other thing saying that you had been overheard talking on the phone, that you were looking to get fired last night, that you were going to quit in a week anyway.

I think his snooping skills were correct in saying that.

Um, would you like to explain that to me? I would think that I was pretty straight forward with you and I would expect the same thing. I don't understand, is this how you do a report for school? Would you like me to call your professor and tell him this is how you do your research?

If you want.

That you get a job and you may not like it but then you come into work drunk. If you didn't want to come to work then a simple, 'I'm not coming in tonight' would suffice rather than go through all this stuff. As well as money missing from the register, I mean, I don't understand.

Yeah, well the main thing to understand is that I'm really not a very big fan of Starbucks and what the company is about and what they stand for and after a while it got to be little too much for me.

So you can't come up to me and say, 'Robin I'm giving my notice now,' you have to come in drunk.

Yes.

That's how you deal with things?

Yes. I usually resort to alcohol in times of crisis.

[pause] Then why go to all this trouble saying you couldn't work on Friday night because you had a soccer banquet. It would have been much easier...

Well that was true.

I understand that was true but then to come in to work Saturday drunk?

Yeah.

Then why go through all this aggravation in the first place to get a job?

I don't have any explanation for that.

[pause] I expect for you not to care about me but at least the people that you work with deserve a little bit better than that because I think they've treated you pretty well.

That's true but they also work at Starbucks so I don't know how much of real people they are.

OK Jake, you know what, that's not

appropriate, and I don't understand then why you took the job at Starbucks. I checked your references, everything came out OK, I don't understand this. Was this a whole ploy on your part?

No.

Then it was what?

Then it was coming to terms with the fact that I couldn't handle working at Starbucks.

So you can't say that? You have to get drunk?

Like I said, I usually resort to alcohol in times of crisis.

And what's this ringing on people's registers and not caring how much money you gave back to someone?

Well I can't vouch for all my actions, I was not one hundred percent sober. I did my best.

I appreciate that you had the courage enough to call me. You may not consider yourself-- you no longer work for Starbucks, which I'm sure was your intention all together.

Yes.

Any tips you have will go back into the store due to whatever damage you did to the register as well as the money that was missing.

OK.

Do you have any questions with that? I'm more than happy...

More than happy to what?

Is there a problem with that?

No that's fine with me.

Fine, then we will not see you anymore.

Yeah, can I still have my paycheck sent to me?

If your address is on your paycheck, as soon as it comes in, it will be sent to you. If you don't get it in the next couple days then you can give me a call.

OK and I'd just like to say good luck with continuing Starbucks plans for world domination and I hope it works out well for you.

Well thanks I appreciate your kind words.

OK.

Bye-bye

Bye.

*To hear the actual recording of this phone call, go to [www.lawofinertia.com/starfucks.mov](http://www.lawofinertia.com/starfucks.mov) Trust me: it's absolutely hilarious.*



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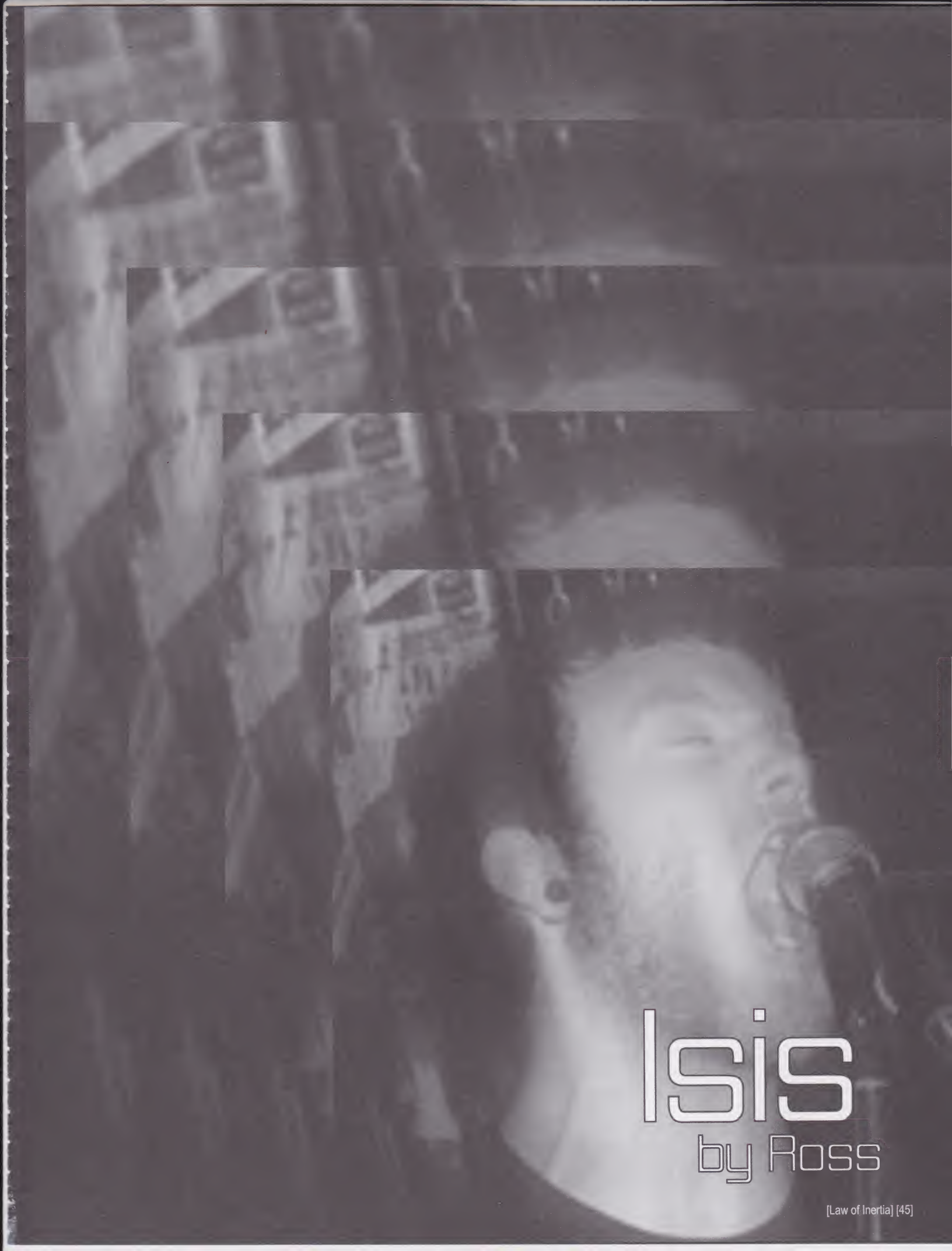
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# Isis

by Ross





good way, mind you. Especially when we got to talking about the nature of aggressive music and what separates bands on MTV from the music he associates himself with. What I found out is that Aaron is about as thoughtful, focused, and intelligent as anyone you will find in music, much less hardcore. And, after you stand in a crowd of people all staring at the walls of amplifiers the band brings on stage to draw you into their own private hell, you won't need to sit in a van next to Aaron to understand him. You already will.

**So, Aaron what's your favorite kind of burrito?**

I'd have to go with black beans and rice, a nice pico de gallo sauce with that, some guacamole. Pretty straightforward.

**You're not vegan?**

No, just vegetarian.

**Like any good hardcore/metal kid.**

I guess, but I don't think anybody else in Isis is vegetarian. A couple of them just eat fish and chicken every once in a while.

**The Time in Malta guys were telling me that where they're from in Indiana a vegetarian is someone who doesn't eat red meat.**

Yeah, I'm from New Mexico and it's like that there. There aren't very many vegetarians there, but there's a lot of good Mexican food you can get vegetarian there.

**Are there any metal or hardcore kids there?**

Definitely. Metal is still alive and well in New Mexico. I think it's one of the last outposts of the full-on metal-heads. There's not a lot of hardcore but there's enough of a scene that I had a little something to entertain myself with. That's how I got into hardcore, with local bands.

**You did a distro out there, right?**

Yeah, I did a distro and some crappy zines...

**We've all done crappy zines.** (laughter)

Towards the end of my time there before I moved to Boston was when I started thinking about doing a record label.

**So now that you're done with art school in Boston are you going to stay there?**

Probably not. Isis as a band and the label are talking about relocating somewhere else but who knows where that will be to. West coast I think. Part of the dispute is that nobody can decide where to go.

**Even though Hydra Head is your operation, you don't want to be like, "tough shit."**

Well, a guy named Mark—who you know—really runs it with me. We could easily agree on one place, but Isis is the problem. I think we'd like to go to San Francisco but some people feel like it's too far to go.

**There's an amazing metal scene there. Really?**

**No, it's actually small.** (laughter) Okay, let's start. I read somewhere that you wanted Isis to be more than just a band that makes music, but rather a collective method of presentation. Like an artistic collective, if you will. What

Aaron Turner is a man of many faces. Among others, he is a magnificent graphic and visual artist, innovative label owner, and sometime-rocker. After playing in various Boston hardcore bands, he set up the Isis project which plays music so heavy, so brooding, and intense it is amazingly soothing and beautiful. I must admit, I wasn't much of a fan of Isis when I stumbled upon early recordings like a demo tape that circulated a few short years ago. But, after seeing the band live a few times and witnessing the power and passion with which these five guys play, it is hard to deny that Isis is not only doing something truly special, but they are also one of the most thoughtful bands ever to plug in a distortion pedal and a keyboard. When not touring the nation or sitting at his computer constructing the most incredible CD packaging you've ever seen, he runs Hydra Head Records, a label known for putting out music much like Isis in its intensity as well as intelligence. After listening to a few of the many releases this band has done in its short career, I had to sit down with its brainchild and figure out exactly what goes on in the head of a man who seems both tortured and inspired. I have known Aaron a bit through my dealings with his label and have always known him to be just as intense as his music is piercing. Before a Napalm Death show at CBGBs, I had a chance to sit down in the Isis van and talk to the guy face to face. It was a sweltering New York City summer day and the sweat pouring off our faces did little to calm me. Aaron, on the other hand, was as composed and focused ever. I don't know him very well and have only met him a few times, but the guy is practically the living embodiment of his music. He stares at you with these amazing blue eyes, the stoner facial hair, and a deathly serious glare that makes even the most confident interviewer feel disconcerted. Then there are those moments when he'll chuckle at some inside-joke and you feel completely relieved that he's not taking this more seriously than you are. Perhaps I got him on an off-day, since it was hot as hell, but the guy is as brooding as they come. In a



**did you mean by that?**

Well referring to the records themselves, I didn't want the music to be the only focus. Definitely being a graphic artist and appreciating that side of things, I didn't want Isis to just be music. I wanted people to get into the graphic imagery in the artwork with the way the lyrics and text are included. Also with the live show, we want the sets to be more of a cohesive piece than just song by song. Eventually we'd like to do something visual as far as the live setting goes. But, we've had a problem with Neurosis comparisons thus far, so we want to come up with something that's equally as entertaining but not a rip-off of that idea. Obviously they're not the first band to do it, but there's already enough similarities that we want to push it further.

**Why would visual imagery be important to a band like Isis?**

From my point of view music and art can only be strengthened by the addition of each other. Music, like visual art, can be incredibly powerful on its own, but sometimes especially moving images, like film and music, can be really inspiring. We have a guy who's working on some animated stuff for a DVD for us. There's just something about seeing a really powerful visual image as set to music that can be amazing. It can be a deeper experience than if they were by themselves.

**Do you think of Isis as performance art?**

I think with a good live hardcore band there is a certain element of that. There is a certain sense of theatrics involved. You see Dillinger [Escape Plan] and those guys are going nuts so their physical aggression is part of the performance, it's not just the music. I think Isis is the same way, but I would be very hesitant to call it performance art just because of the pretentious connotations that are associated with it. I do enjoy a lot of performance art but a lot of it is bullshit. I like the idea of incorporating those elements into the music without labeling it as such. I like the idea of bringing music that is set and composed into a different context based on what people see and feel with that music.

**One thing I like about Isis is that**



**instead of it just being a band that makes music and just lets everything else come together, Isis has very acute and scrutinized aspects to everything in the band—from the music to the packaging.**

Yeah, I think that's definitely something we set out to do with the project. We just set out in the beginning to do something more than just a musical experience. We think of all those little minute details matter because all those things together make up the personality of the band. We wanted to make T-shirts and records and posters and stuff that all have a common idea in mind—whatever that idea is at the time—and we think all those things together make up how the band is portrayed and how people internalize us. I don't necessarily think we have an image to uphold, but we definitely have a personality. That comes through in everything we do, from the bands we decide to tour with to a certain extent, the way we record our albums, they style of artwork. We all have different strengths in different areas and the band is stronger as a whole because of it.

**If you had to give a few adjectives for the personality of Isis what do you think they would be?**

Dysfunctional to a certain extent. It's an interesting contrast between the chaos of the personalities of the members and the unified front we show in our presentation. Schizophrenic, I would say. As far as the subject matter goes, lyrically the stuff I deal with is kind of dark but not without a sense of hope. I feel the same way about our music: it's very heavy and oppressive but there's also that eye of the storm just as it gets its heaviest. An ethereal ambience. We don't want to have a one dimensional personality. We're not bent on death and destruction or apocalyptic ideas, even though much of the music is very aggressive. There is still a very meditative, melodic, and almost tribal feel to the songs. Sorry, that was more than just a few adjectives.

**I think there's a very machine oriented, almost industrial feeling. Is that intentional?**

Yes, of course. In some of the stuff we do it can be very grinding and repetitive, like a machine. It's intended to be very rhythmic and driving. Again, it goes back to the schizophrenic side of the band. I think it can be very primal and basic feeling created, but at the same time we're using very modern equipment and some of our sounds conjure the thought of a factory. It's a blend of the old and new.

**It's a very post-modern idea, actually.**

Definitely.

**There are bands like Dillinger Escape Plan who play a bazillion miles an hour and go from part to part and style to style while you guys play the same part or the same mood, which is slow and grinding, for up to a few minutes.**

I'd like to expand on that idea to make the song structures more cohesive and flow better. I'm not saying that Dillinger isn't a cohesive band, it's just a different approach.

**I think your music isn't too far off from what techno is about. At a rave you hear a 20 minute long drum and bass track that is basically the same beat, same melody**



repeated for a long time. I think that's the reason people like that stuff so much because you sort of lose yourself in the monotony.

It's trance inducing. We want to have that effect on the audience. We want to give them a very ritualized, meditative environment. I lose myself in the music when I play and when I forget I'm playing it usually is the best. When we started the band we realized that everyone was trying to play as quickly as they could, very technically, with very fast riffs and stuff like that. We wanted to approach it a different way. Being simple doesn't necessarily mean that the music would be boring. We just wanted to achieve a simplicity that was really satisfying.

**Well, I wouldn't call it simple. I mean, you guys have more instruments up there on your stage at any given moment than most bands out there do.**

It's orchestrated in a way where many of the instruments are playing off each other, but at the same time we all meet for that common ground. While the parts are repetitive we try to make subtle changes so each piece evolves instead of turns. I think



Isis can only be understood when you listen to us a lot of times. I think if you listen to each one of our records once or twice you'll miss a lot of the subtleties.

**The music has taken on a much more digital side as of late.**

Well, we try to do a lot of things with that. Aaron Harris, the drummer, likes a really big-rock, Zeppelin feel, and we like the guitars really beefy and thick. But as far as the digital stuff goes we used electronics early on but we didn't really know how to assimilate it into the music. The two people we had in that position originally were both good, but until we got Cliff, the new keyboard player, we didn't have someone that really had a grip on how to fully integrate it into each piece.

**It's interesting 'cause you see bands like Refused or Ink and Dagger or At the Drive-in use digital instruments and they never quite pull it off seamlessly.**

I think with a lot of people who are trying to do electronic stuff they have their rock songs and they have their electronic songs and they don't really combine the two ideas. It's like they set each song for one or the other, but they never think of them both at the same time. There have been bands that have been successful at it like Godflesh and Neurosis, so that's more where we got our influences from. A lot of us listen to music that is purely electronic too.

**Like what?**

Tons of shit. Like hip-hop, which is almost always based on drum machines or drums and very repetitive structures. Cliff likes a lot of drum and bass stuff. Jeff and I like a lot of quieter, more ambient stuff.

**I imagine you're big into stuff like Earth.**

Definitely. There's countless bands in sub-genres of sub-genres that use electronics that we all appreciate.

**Just to change the topic a bit, a lot of people that are our age or like our parents or something might say that metal doesn't make sense to them. Or, some would think of Limp Bizkit or Slipknot when they think of metal. It seems to me that you associate yourself with a lot of intelligent metal.**





Well, I don't like the idea of "intelligent" because it makes me seem holier than thou, or smarter than everyone else. But I think that a lot of bands that play heavy music don't put a lot of thought into what they do. They're influenced by other bands that don't have much musical depth beyond hardcore. A lot of bands are really bent on the death and destruction trip and they like a lot of violent imagery, and that's not necessarily bad. I definitely appreciate the darker side of metal, but it is sort of low-brow to a certain extent. It gets old and there's only so many times you can hear a band scream about blood and guts and death. A lot of bands are really talented but the problem is that so many bands imitate them that it sounds dull. I don't think old school hardcore sounds nearly as fresh and original as it did 15 years ago. Repetition dumbs the music down. I think every musical form has flawed views by the public. Like a lot of really artsy electronic shit is viewed as being pretentious and obtuse while a lot of heavy music is viewed as being very base and retarded, and a lot of indie rock is viewed as being happy and empty and devoid of emotion. Heavy music has a bad rap but so does every other genre in some way. From my point of view we're just trying to do the best we can in the most interesting way we know how. Obviously everything is derivative and everyone is influenced by somebody, but some bands and musicians further the music and some just add to the white noise.

**What would you say is a major difference between you guys and a new metal band heard on the radio?**

I can't say what those people's motivations are, 'cause I don't know them and I don't know why they play the music that they play. But, first off, a band like that is obviously more concerned with commercial success and they tailor their sound for that.

**Do you think that's a bad thing?**

Not at all, it just depends what you want to get out of your music. To me that kind of music sounds really empty. It doesn't have much soul, the

recordings are really clean and they don't have much atmosphere. There's nothing at all wrong with that but we're more concerned with writing music we feel and that we love and that makes us excited. A lot of bands just want a good crowd and a certain feel to get people worked up. They want to cater to the audience, which can be really cool. That's just not what we're about. A lot of bands like Botch, us, Candiria, Dillinger, we're all heavy bands that want to expand on the bounds of metal. For me a big part of it is the artwork. A lot of bands just revert to the blood

and guts and scratchy logo. Also, lyrics for me can really make or break a band. A lot of commercial metal bands have lyrics that are not inventive. Sometimes I look through liner notes of good bands that play good music, but their lyrics just suck and that can make or break a band for me.

**Do you like any bands that may fall into the commercial world but are also really experimenting, like Pink Floyd or Radiohead or something?**

Oh, definitely! Success and creativity are totally different, and you know that Ross. Pink Floyd and Radiohead have definitely influenced Isis—even though it's petty cliché to say these days. Those are bands that have obviously totally fucked up how pop music is played. They have really long albums that don't fit well into radio formats but fit amazingly well when played song after song.

**So, do you guys make concept albums?**

Uh yes. I hate to say that because often times it leads to either being labeled pretentious or people asking about the concept. I feel like I'm put on the spot with that because I don't want to give away the mystery of the band because that compromises our art. Also, most concept albums are like about fantasy stories with dragons and knights and stuff. I don't want to be too specific or people won't take the time to explore it themselves.

**Without detailing what each concept is, do you guys sit down to write songs for each release with a concept or idea in mind?**

No, my lyric writing is generally influenced by the direction of the music. I think with every album I try to come up with a loose idea or a story and then try to conceive it with the music and the lyrics. By the time we go into record the album it all just comes together. Especially since I'm writing each song with the past songs in my head. It's a gradual process really.

**Photos by Ross**

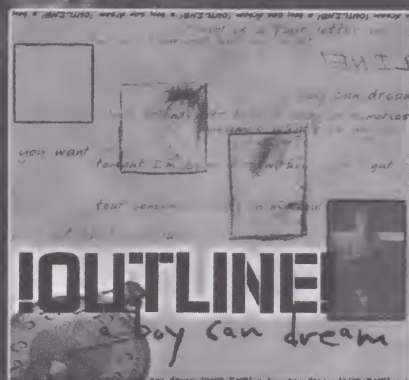




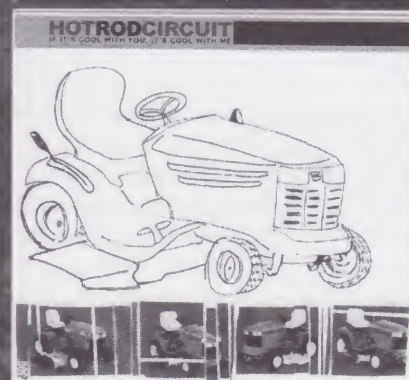
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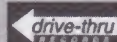
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# Henry Rollins

## by Ross

Does Henry Rollins really need any introduction? In case you've been living under a rock for the past 20 years, you might not have noticed Henry's work with seminal DC hardcore band SOA, his tenure in the legendary Black Flag, or his latest sonic assaults in Rollins Band. If you never watch television, you might not have noticed Rollins Bands' video for "Liar" which received modest airplay a few years back, the hosts of MTV specials he's appeared in, his spoken word performances, his books of poetry, his comedic acts, or even cameo appearances in films like *Johnny Mnemonic* or *The Chase*. Had you been living under a rock for the past 20 years you may never have heard of Henry Rollins and his exploits. But, even if you are not into punk rock and know little of his history under the MTV level, it is hard to deny that Mr. Rollins has done everything there is to do in the music business. I first found out about Henry when I was 14. I had read some article that mentioned Black Flag and how important they were. For some reason the name of the band didn't stick, but the name of its most prestigious singer did, almost as if Henry Rollins is synonymous with Black Flag or punk in general. So, a week later I found myself taking a chance on "End of Silence" by Rollins band. It was unlike anything I had heard before. Years later I think that CD more readily fits into the metal scene than either the punk or grunge scenes (this is 1992, mind you). But, it blew me away. I even scribbled the words, "Sometimes things don't work out, sometimes happens all the time," onto my wall as a mantra of sorts for my high school years. A year or so later, I was fortunate enough to purchase the "Damaged" record by Black Flag after I heard the song "TV Party" on the local college radio station. That too floored me. I had never heard music so raw and unrestrained before. It wasn't polished, it wasn't pretty, and the singer was damn near the most pissed off guy my 15 year-old ears had ever encountered. Throughout the years I honestly became less interested in Henry and more interested in what was happening in the underground at the time. To my snobbish eyes, specials on weightlifting with Henry on MTV and mentions in the "Random Notes" section of Rolling Stone did not give anyone credibility, even Henry Rollins, a man who exudes cred from every pore. But, when I got the chance to interview him, I pulled out that battered and worn copy of "End of Silence" and "Damaged," not to mention the two or three spoken word/comedy records I had of his, a book of poetry, and some other Henry memorabilia, and eagerly awaited my chance to talk to a guy who has truly touched my life in many ways. I was so nervous dialing the phone number of Henry's office, but when I heard the "hello" on the other end, I knew I was in good company.

Henry, I've got so many questions and so much stuff I want to ask you, but I'm kind of worried that I'm going to bore you.

You can ask whatever you want and I'll try to answer it as best I can.

Okay, well, can you estimate how many interviews you've done in your life?

When there's an album out I'll do up to 400 a year.

No way!

Yeah, 'cause there's a lot of countries, and the fact that we don't get airplay or video play we have to manually hand-crank awareness. So, that means I do every possible print interview and radio interview possible to get the word out about what we're doing. Take a band like the Red Hot Chili Peppers—not putting them down—but there's a band that gets played eight times a day everywhere.

Eight times a day? Try eight billion times a day.

Right, but there's an awareness of what they have to do so they don't have to ring the bell since the bell is rung for them. Good for them, I wish I had the same problem. Like Johnny Appleseed I have to go to every walkman that is on and go "what do you want to know?" So, that's why I do more interviews than other guys in bands. I do a lot. Also, since I have a heavy release schedule and a lot of other things going on there's always a different press thing to do.

After all these years and up to 400 interviews a year do people ever surprise you in interviews by asking things that no one has ever asked you before or something?

No, but they'll ask questions every once in a while where you go, "God, that's a good question, I can't answer it." Someone asked me if my house was on fire what is the one possession I'd run out with. It makes me have to assess what I think about my material



**"If you say you don't like my new record and you want me to play like this as opposed to like that, I don't care. But, if I had a choice, I'd much rather you like my music than hate it. Who wouldn't? It's so easy for some bands to say, 'I don't care what you think,' but I do care. I care a lot."**

goods and I never really think about stuff.

**What did you say?**

I told her the three-ring binder that contains all the photos and my correspondence with my friend Ian Mackaye. That's a guy I've known since I was 15, and I'm 40 now. It's a lot of life. That would be the thing I'd risk running into a burning building for.

**Are there ever questions that when you sit around when you're not doing interviews you think, "damn, I wish someone would ask me this question!"**

Not really, I'm just basically there to service the interviewer. That's why I say that whatever you'd like to know is fine.

**Well, forgive me if I'm a little less professional than Rolling Stone.**

I deplore Rolling Stone.

**Do you?**

Yeah, I think they're an utter failure and waste of paper. I really think it's lame that a magazine that was supposed to be about music can put Brad Pitt and the cast of Friends on their cover. It's like People Magazine for paunchy middle-aged people with thin ponytails. It doesn't interest me.

**Have you ever been featured in Rolling Stone?**

Oh, many times.

**And, when they say, "hey, we'd really like you to be in our magazine," you respond with, "yeah, whatever" or something?**

No, no, I tell them I'd really like to be in your magazine and also I think you guys are really lame. They laugh and go "okay, anyways here's the questions." So, I answer.

**Do you think it's the same thing with MTV considering they really don't play music anymore?**

Yeah, I think MTV failed. I think it was a great idea and it think that music video can be a really valid form of artistic expression. It can be. And, I really like the idea of MTV as music television, and to be a thing where someone can turn on the TV and see something different. Now, I'm 40 so MTV isn't really talking to me.

**When you were first starting your music career MTV was just starting as well.**

Actually, I'm PMTV, I'm pre-MTV. I'm BMTV! I'm post-MTV.

Yeah, well most people are. Me and Abraham Lincoln. I remember when it first started and you would see Judas Priest and Pat Benatar videos and I never had a TV to watch. I don't even have a TV to get cable on anyway. So, MTV never really had much to do with me. I've done videos and they never really played them all that much.

**Well, they played "Liar" a lot.**

They played "Liar" for about 4 weeks in medium rotation which is about as close to a single as we ever got, at least commercially. It was an interesting time because you see the power of that media. For like a month—and you can really count the days—there was an extra 300 people at each show and you're invited to be at the Grammy's. Then for our next record we made another single and a video and they didn't play it n MTV. All those doors kind of close and those voices fade and those phone calls don't come back.

**It didn't happen that way with the next record "Come in and Burn"?**

No, with "Come in and Burn" that record sold what our records usually sell. It kind of went back to normal.

**Is that good or bad?**

It's neither, it's the truth. To me, the "Weight" record will always be that aberration as far as media phenomenon. It was this thing that had that song where the media light was shown upon us. And boom, I'm on Jay Leno and Conan O'Brien, and all that stuff. Before that album—life goes back to normal where none of these people really want to talk to you and the radio stations don't really play you, but they want to interview me 'cause they know I'm a wise-guy who can actually put a sentence together. I go there now and they interview me and I go, "you don't really play our music!" And they go, "well no, but you're a good interview and you look great, and you did that song 'Liar' which we're going to play now." For me, that was like 50 songs ago. Whatever. It doesn't really matter that much to me.

**Does anyone like a cameraman ever come up to you and say, "Listen man, 'Damaged' [by Black Flag] changed my life."**

People come up to me all the time and say that my books or my music changed them.

**Henry, "End of Silence" and "Damaged" changed my life.**

Yeah, you're not the first. They're good records, I think. I'm proud I was involved in them and that I played on them. To be on the "Damaged" record is cool, because I've been told that that was a pivotal record for a lot of people at the time.

**Yeah I've been told that too! (laughter)**

I didn't write any of it. I was just the singer so I don't take any responsibility for it. The reason that the songs are great—which they are—really has nothing to do with me. That's Greg Ginn and Chuck Dukowski who are extraordinarily talented people. Those songs had all been in the Black Flag set even before I was in the band.

**Like most Black Flag songs. (laughter)**

Well, up to that time. After that record I was directly involved in writing and shaping every Black Flag song. The next 5 albums was me.

**Do you ever feel bitter that you make a record like "Damaged" which is undoubtedly one of the most important punk records of the 1980s or even a song like "TV Party" which has a more commercial appeal than a lot of your other stuff, but it takes a song with Rollins Band that gets played on MTV for the powers that be to get it?**

Bitter no, that's because I work on the music. What happens to it commercially is not always up to me. Nor is it all that important to me.

**Why not?**

Because it's a bunch of suits. It's a bunch of people in offices. It's number crunchers. MTV isn't me, it's not me and the guys in the practice room, it's not my life. I try to make good music, and what happens after we put it out is quite a craps shoot. All of a sudden all these people who I don't know come into play. They aren't in the practice room and are not part of the creative process. I'm not much of a commercial artist beyond the fact that I release things and sell them, which is commerce and that puts me in the same league as REO Speedwagon and Fugazi.

**I don't think anyone has ever used REO Speedwagon and Fugazi in the same sentence.**

And the Clash, they're all commercial artists. They can't just give the records away, they have to exchange money to do what they do. Anyways, all that kind of vicarious action that happens with the art after it's been banged onto a little 5-inch disc is not always in my hands nor is it really to me the real story of the record. People will say, "yeah, your records are commercial flops." And, I say, "sure, but to me a Britney Spears record is an artistic flop." I'd rather have a commercial flop than an artistic flop. And that's why I don't really care about reviews or success in a commercial sense. That's why I'm not bitter that MTV didn't do this or that these people didn't do that. Young people are going to buy what they see and hear. If you play them Miles Davis they'll buy that. If Miles Davis were being played on MTV then they'd buy that. Well, if that's what it's down to then why would I get angry that Britney Spears sells more records than I do? I'd rather be grateful—rather than being angry—I'm just grateful that I get to play after 21 years.

**You hear about a lot of musicians that are fabulously successful for two or three years but as soon as they've left the limelight their personal lives go rocketing downhill. Almost as if they view themselves the same way others view them.**

Well, that's because they bought into the media and the success aspect. Anybody in this business who gloms onto the success aspect, or the fame aspect rather, and sees that as any kind of reality and not exactly what it is—perception—is going to lose. Fame is a light that always dims after a while. If you make yourself equivalent to that that always dissipates, well then you too shall dissipate. That is why I have never taken any of that seriously. It's why I still have a mind.



**Do you empathize or sympathize with someone like Britney Spears, 'cause let's be honest: in three years no one will remember her.**

No one will know her name but she'll probably be laughing long and well fed for the rest of her days.

**Good point.**

It depends on what she's in it for. You'd have to go to the individuals. I would guess that the Spice Girls weren't all that crushed that their second record didn't catch on the way their first one did. I think they're all very happily moneyed and well-housed, and they have as many Gucci shoes as a gal could want, and as much throbbing cock as a gal can handle, and a fast car. I'm sure they're laughing from a very high place. On the other side of the scale Neil Young will make two records that no one ever hears about. And, another one will come out and everyone will go, "oh, Neil made a record."

**Or Johnny Cash, for instance.**

Or Lou Reed. They just keep making records. Lou said it best: "I'm free to do what I want, no one cares what I do either way." Lou's been left to his own devices and his last record is his best one in 15 years! In my opinion the "Ecstasy" record is utter godhead. That's kind of more where I'm at. I don't attach any value to any aspect of fame whatsoever.

**It might be the same way with a hardcore band from, say, early '80s in Washington DC that is a small band that no one cares about.**

It's how you perceive what your job is. There are a lot of bands that are big who do exactly what they want. Like Fugazi, I've heard their new record and there's not a single on that record. It's also the best thing they've ever done. It is the best record that's coming out this year. Nothing I've heard this year is within ICBM missile hitting distance of this record. The point I'm making is that they have no commercial concerns whatsoever. They strive to make good music. Fame, record sales, appeal does not matter. Only the music matters. That is something I've tried to emulate in everything I do. Only the music has weight to me. What sells, what people think, it is secondary. I mean, I don't make music and put out records so that no one will hear them, and I want people to like what we do I hope very much they do like what we do otherwise I wouldn't put them out. With that said I wish our records the best of luck and many people find them a welcome addition to their record collection. It's not the money that I'm after but just contributing something to somebody's life. Otherwise, I'd just keep all the music on DAT from the practice room so that we'd remember how to play them. For me, one of the main reasons I write a song is so that I can play it on stage in front of people.

Making a record is this boring exercise I do every 6 months, which I really do not enjoy and am always happy when it's over.

**I read somewhere once that (and forgive me for paraphrasing) that you take the money you're given and throw it right back in their faces to do what you want to do and be creative in however manner you see fit.**

Well, a lot of money I've gotten from work I've done. It's well over a million dollars at this point, which is not an easy sum for me to accumulate and I've put it into other peoples' books and records. Very little of that money came back. Basically, I saw people who I believed in so I put my money where my mouth was. Some other peoples' money a well. I got Dreamworks and Universal to release some great be-bop and jazz records that no one bought, but at least they're out there.

**It's easy for me to see why you and Ian Mackaye would be such good friends. It seems that the motivation behind Dischord and Minor Threat and Fugazi is much the same as what you're talking about now.**

He's into the music and for him—and I don't want to put words in the man's mouth—but for him Dischord is a label that puts out bands from the DC/Maryland/Virginia area and they do not look to sign the big Swedish band. They are a service. They put out these records by these bands that they think are cool so you the consumer can

investigate music. It's music first, commerce is a very far second. They need to pay salaries and expenses, but they don't strive to be as rich as they can, that's why the records sell for ten-dollars and not eighteen. I am a more commercially minded person than Ian. Ian will not even speak to Rolling Stone or any magazine that advertises alcohol or tobacco. I think that's amazing. If Rolling Stone called me tomorrow and said, "hey, we want to put you on the cover," I'd say, "great, when's the photo shoot?" I'd love to be on the cover of Rolling Stone. More power to him. We are very similar but we've taken two very vastly different roads. He would never be on a major label, ever. Me? I was on a major label for over ten years.

**I read in that new DC hardcore book—did you read that book by Mark Anderson?**

I know Mark, but I haven't had a chance to check it out yet.

**There's a lot of interesting stuff in that book about you, actually.**

Oh great, from a man I haven't talked to in ten years. (laughter)

**But, it says in there that you would never record for an indie label again.**

Well, after being fucked over by so many indie labels, no I wouldn't. So where's the contradiction there now that I am on an indie label. Well, I didn't record for them. I own the "Nice" album myself. I paid for it myself. The cover-art, I paid for. The record companies don't own that record, we just licensed it. I paid for the session and we even kept the publishing rights to the record. That's what I do with my money, I buy the means of production. So, I took the finished mastered record to independent record labels and said: "Here's the deal. Here are the twelve songs, they are not for sale, they are for rent. You may have them for five years. If this interests you you can get back to me." No major will want to do a licensing deal because they want to own everything. I told them "Here are your options," and most labels said, "We're not interested." I said, "Fine, I have a record label. I can put it out myself. It's your distribution and your advertising budget I was mostly after." And, actually the label we most wanted to be on came back around: Sanctuary. They told me that they had given it a big think and "We really like the record and we will agree to license it and we will agree to your budget on advertising, marketing, etc." So, basically I didn't record for them I recorded for me and our fans. Sanctuary gets to release a great record that they had absolutely no say in the production of at all. I paid for everything right down to the promo photos. They are merely borrowing the title. In that we retain one-hundred percent of the creative products.

**If Michael Jackson—who owns the rights to all the Beatles songs....**

Actually he sold them, back to Paul McCartney.

**Did he? Okay, well, let's just say that in a parallel universe Michael Jackson came to you and said, "Henry, I'd like to buy the publishing rights to all your music for all the tea in China."**

**What would your response be?**

Um, no. Because when you sell the publishing rights to your songs then you sell the right to see how your music is used.

Michael Jackson could easily put my music in a Dentein ad or a Nike ad. That might put it in a place where you don't want it. You'd lose control of your perception of your music and I wouldn't want to part with that.

**Is it just artistic control? Or is there more to it like "I own it, it's mine."**

No, it's not just "I own this, ha ha me take!" It's the fact that I made a creation which I worked hard on and poured my soul into. It's the struggle to maintain artistic integrity. It's a situation where only the artist cares about integrity in the music business, it's not the suits' job to care about

artistic integrity. Don't ask the marketing guy or the radio guy or the lawyer what he thinks of the music, it's not their job to care and I don't give a flying fuck what the marketing guy thinks of my music. His job is to sell my record. His job is not to like the record, his job is to bullshit my record into the stores or into a magazine.

**So do you care what anybody thinks?**

I care what the fans think.

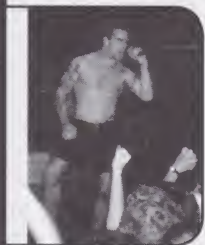
**Does that mean me, a kid who does a zine out of my bedroom who also gets the record for free? Or, is that just confined to the people who are gonna spend that ten-bucks on the record.**

As a journalist I don't care what you think of the record. Good review, bad review it's all so much empty calories because I know how you make a living on that respect. You make a living because I make a record and you get to feed off the crumbs that fall from my art.

**Wait, I make a living in no way from my zine.**

I'm talking about journalists. You or the guy from the New York Times, it doesn't matter. It's fine if that's how someone makes a dollar and if they buy macaroni and cheese with the money they got from trashing my record. But, I don't care at all about that. Now, you in your room listening to my record, that matters to me. I really hope that we've done something that adds to your life, that you like. If you say you don't like my new record and you want me to play like this as opposed to like that, I don't care. But, if I had a choice, I'd much rather you like my music than hate it. Who wouldn't? It's so easy for some bands to say, "I don't care what you think," but I do care. I care a lot.

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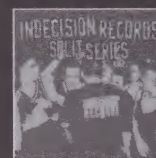
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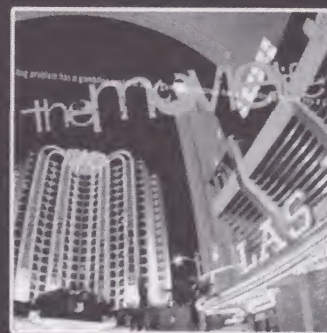
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# Rival Schools

by Ross





This was a very interesting interview. I told a few people that I was interviewing Walter of Rival Schools and all of them gave me a look of surprise before blurting out something like, "tell Walter that the Quicksand song on the *Anti-Matter* compilation changed my life," or, "Ross, you people from the west coast don't understand how important Quicksand was to the hardcore scene here." It's true, I don't. I always liked Quicksand, and of course I liked Walter's work in Gorilla Biscuits-- who are to this day possibly the most commercially successful band hardcore will ever know-- but it wasn't until I heard the Deftones's first two records which practically copied the entire "Slip" album lock-stock-and-barrel that I began to take notice of the guy who wrote all those songs. I also took notice when he produced Hot Water Music's "No Division" record, when I found out that he had written everything on the first Civ record, and when I saw Rival Schools open for Burning Airlines a few months ago here in New York City. Their sound was unmistakably Walter, with heavy riffs and vocals that seemed to come from the furthest reaches of the heart, but there was something more to this music than Quicksand or Gorilla Biscuits. There was melody in Rival Schools like no other work he'd done: lush and spacey textures, and the sincere voice that his work is known for. So, one Tuesday afternoon after I finished work, I rushed downtown to meet Walter and bassist, Cache, for some hummus, salad, and conversation. You will see from this interview that Walter is a very energetic, almost hyperactive, spirit. He talks fast, he talks kinetically, and he sometimes speaks a bit too soon. He is much smaller physically than one would guess from his music. He is not too tall, yet amply wiry and skinny as any good hyperactive guy should be. But, he is a very nice, sincere individual who I could easily see myself meeting for a bite to eat some summer day. I had a great time doing this interview, as there was much laughter all around the table. And, it is clear that this guy who has more than paid his dues is happy to discuss his music and the reason he still plays it.

[talking about Ian Mackaye and the new book on the history of DC punk. "Dance of Days."]

**Walter:** Okay, we're starting now.

**So, what do you guys think about Ian Mackaye?**

**Cache:** I love him. He's one of my favorite artists.

**Walter:** Although one time... wait, I shouldn't tell this story.

**Cache:** Okay, here it comes.

**No, don't stop him, this is going to be good!**

**Walter:** He's awesome and he's fantastic. Really, I think he's fantastic—he's an inspiration, so take this with a grain of salt. But, one time he embarrassed me at the show that is mentioned in the DC book. Should I tell this story?

**Tell it!**

**Walter:** This has been in me for like ten years.

**Cache:** Just let it rip.

**Walter:** Okay, this isn't that bad. I had heard that Ian Mackaye was into GB of all the New York stuff. Obviously someone is going to tell us that Ian Mackaye is into GB whether or not it's true. At any rate, we got the drift that he thought we were a little juvenile—I mean we were—but, of all the stuff a friend of mine told me that Ian Mackaye liked Gorilla Biscuits. I was like, "wow! Holy shit!" I had that Minor Threat single so he was like my idol, I thought he was amazing! So, we're doing the Gorilla Biscuits album

and Jordan from Revelation and our guitar player Alex said, "well, Ian likes the stuff so why don't you ask him to produce the record. He produced Verbal Assault's record, right?" I was like, "fuck, dude, I don't want to call Ian Mackaye. I don't want to sound like an asshole. I don't want to call this dude. Just because he liked the GB seven-inch doesn't mean he wants to make an album with us." But, I figured it couldn't hurt to ask. So, we got his number from somebody and I called him up he was super gracious and super cool but he didn't want to do it. He told me that the only reason he did the Verbal Assault thing was because Kevin Seconds asked him to, and he was bummed out at the time because he had produced a Rollins Band record and Rollins Band put his name really big on the record. He explained how he felt about it. He said, "I like your band, I think you guys are really good, but that's really not what I'm into." So, I said thanks and hung up the phone and I felt like a dick, but what can you expect?

**Yeah, but maybe he would have said yes. Maybe he would have done it and we wouldn't have had the monumental album that is "Start Today". He might have said, "Walter, instead of that mosh part, how about we break it down to a slow feed-back laden groove."**

**Walter:** But wait, there's more.

**Oh sorry, please continue.**

**Walter:** So, I wasn't too bummed about it. That stuff happens, I'm sure he goes through that every day of the week. I'm sure I wasn't the first jerk to call him up. Anyway, we're playing a string of shows with Fugazi years later when I was in Quicksand. I was like, "Holy shit, dude, my dumb band is playing with Fugazi!" We were only playing a few shows with them but I was so happy. I just remember one night we're backstage and we're all hanging out. All of Fugazi is there and all of Quicksand is there and we're all just hanging out. They're totally cool and they're giving us pizza and they were super wonderful to us. All of a sudden Ian decides to tell the story about how he decided not to produce the record. (laughter) I felt like I was shrinking. I was like, "oh yeah, I remember." (much laughter) "Hey Walter, remember that time you called me up to produce the record and I said no?" I was like "Oh yeah, that was a really fun time for me, Ian, I really remember that fondly."

**Was he joking?**

I think he expected me to go "ha ha, Ian." I think he brought it up as if it were a funny thing for us to reminisce about. I just felt like a jerk, and I don't think that he thought of it that way, but I was thinking, "why'd you have to bring that up, man? Now, I feel like a jerk in front of everyone." But, I'm sure he didn't mean anything by it. I'm sure he was just trying to have fun. And, don't get me wrong, I love him, and thank God he still keeps making music! I love "Instrument" so much, it's my favorite one they've ever done.

**Mine is "In on the Kill Taker."**

**Walter:** That one is wonderful too. I'm not mad at



Ian Mackaye, but I just thought he didn't have to tell that story. So the moral of the story is that even Ian Mackaye is capable of social faux pas.

**I imagine there are some people out there who aren't into punk or whatever that would say that everything he does it a social faux pas.**

**Walter:** He's kind of like a holy figure. He's like the godfather or hardcore almost. Like Jimmy Gestapo. **No, he's so much bigger than Jimmy G.**

**Walter:** He may be but Jimmy Gestapo could kick your ass if you saw him on the lower east side. I'm not afraid of Ian kicking my ass but I'm not going to say anything bad about Jimmy Gestapo 'cause he would and could kick my ass.

**Okay, let's get this interview officially underway. Walter, you sing and play guitar; and Cache you play bass—just so everyone out there is clear. So, this question might be kind of a stretch but I'm going to ask it anyway. The name Rival Schools United by Fate is from a video game. And, from some quick research on the internet, the video game is based on the movie *The Warriors*. I take it you guys have seen that movie?**

**Cache:** It's like the bible of my teenage years. I love that movie.

**Okay, do you see any similarities between the plot of *The Warriors*—where there are a bunch of kids all defending their turf and honor, and they're all different and are obviously into different things—and what you guys are trying to do with your music?**

**Walter:** (laughter) Wow, that is probably the strangest question I've ever been asked in an interview. I'm going to go with you on this one and say that Rival Schools as its own entity is like one of the schools trying to navigate its way through the jungle of the music world. There's the baseball players who are Limp Bizkit. I think in that movie the Warriors are the faithful, they're the ones who believe so much that they don't give up. And, I like that analogy. We as a band believe in our music so much that we're willing to fight to keep it going and to make it—even if that means not giving up this dream of rockstardom or whatever.

**Well, let me modify the question and bit to make it a bit clearer. I think you guys in your careers—Cache with Iceburn, and Walter with Gorilla Biscuits and Quicksand—really are getting further and further away from straight-up hardcore. You're basically playing indie rock now. Is Rival Schools, either implicitly or explicitly, saying that we don't all have to be the same? We don't all have to be the baseball players, we don't all have to be the breakdancers?**

**Walter:** I see what you mean. I would say that with my shit I'm always thinking about who were the first people that got into my music, Gorilla Biscuits people and that kind of thing. My music has to keep speaking to those people. But, I'm an adult now. When I wrote the stuff for Gorilla Biscuits I was a kid in high school. I'm a musician, I really am. I move forward as a musician at the same time that I move forward as a person, and I want my music to reflect that—it must reflect that to stay vital.

**You've gotten better at playing, probably?**

**Walter:** It's not even about getting better, I don't know that I've gotten any better since I was like 16 or 17. I'm not really that good technically. My feelings are more sophisticated, or better put: I have a more sophisticated understanding of them. I definitely have a more sophisticated understanding of music but I don't think that means anything. I don't hold that in high value. I think a person that plays guitar better than I do can easily write a better album if the feeling that connects to that person connects to the music in its own way. Actually, I was just telling someone that we did an interview with that I think that Rival Schools' songs like "Travel by Telephone" and "Good Things" are Gorilla Biscuits songs slowed down. A lot of these songs if you speed them up to thrash beats then you have GB. Most of them have the exact same chord progressions, just much slower and a bit more subtle. There's also a lot of the same messages. In my mind I think there's far more Gorilla Biscuits in Rival Schools than Quicksand.

**Really? Do you think other people would agree with that?**

**Walter:** I don't know if anyone would think of it that way, but I certainly consciously thought of it that way. I was thinking GB. I could write you the chord progressions out on paper and I could show you that it would be very very similar to a Gorilla Biscuits song, just speeded up. I could show you where the mosh part would be and

where the jump-in-the-air part would be. (laughter)

**I never would have guessed that.**

**Walter:** Well, I hide it well but I really haven't grown much, have I? (laughter) Another thing Ian said to me was, "yeah, I really like the New York stuff, but why do you always have to have a mosh part?" (laughter) I swear to God. I feel like it's important for me—there's a lot of bands like 7 Seconds who are playing the exact same music they were playing twenty years ago, and God fucking bless 'em, because that music is wonderful and it was meant to be heard. I think hardcore as a style, reggae as a style, techno as a style, as a genre of music, jazz as a style, whatever, it all is worthy of preservation. It all needs to be out there. Me, I'm really eclectic in my tastes, and I'm more on a personal trip and my personal trip is also connected to the people that I associate myself with who expose me to different sounds and different styles. It all affects me and so do the people I surround myself with. Like Cache.

**I think Ian Mackaye would say the same thing about his music.**

**Walter:** He's a perfect example, certainly. He's a wonderful example of someone that's on a journey of some sort. He reinvents himself all the time like none other, and I guess I can only hope to even emulate him the slightest bit. But, if he were playing songs like "In My Eyes" now then Minor Threat would be the biggest thing in hardcore! There was a time where that was all I cared about—just hard as fuck music—but if I tried to do that now it would just be putting on a show. I wouldn't be playing music that I felt and that grew inside me. It would just be a show and that's not the kind of person I am.

**But, at the same time if 7 Seconds wants to stay in the same place they were and are at, then that's cool?**

**Walter:** Yeah, totally. Kevin Seconds is an artist and he has put in his time and paid his dues.

**Cache:** He is a real true person. He's not fake at all. He's doing it from the heart if anyone is.

**Walter:** Ian Mackaye just happens to have a very straight trajectory of point A to point D and you can almost





trace his path.

**I hate to talk about Ian so much, but he is such a good analogy here.**

**Walter:** But, if you listen to those early Fugazi records, I can hear Minor Threat on those. I may be the only one that thinks that "Instrument" and "Out of Step" aren't as different as they may seem.

**But you're right. You can hear him going from a more aggressive, in-your-face style with bands like the Teen Idles and Minor Threat, to a more subtly heavy sound with bands like Embrace and Fugazi. It gets more controlled. And, I think you've done much the same thing with your music.**

**Cache:** Some Fugazi songs, like "Five Corporations" I think is what it's called, are way harder and more pissed off than anything Minor Threat ever could have done. It's just more controlled and slower so the blatant aggression isn't there like it is with Minor Threat.

**Walter:** I think that's what makes what I do interesting to people, and it's what makes it interesting to me. I could try to do something that I think people want to hear, but I'm not a good liar. I'm a shitty liar. I don't think I could play music if my heart wasn't into it anymore. But, I think there would come a point that if I were still playing Quicksand stuff that eventually people would see through it and not be convinced since I wouldn't be convinced anymore. I see all the Rival Schools songs as GB songs, and it's funny to me at how different they may seem on the surface but how similar they are when you really dig down deep to how the songs are constructed. It's almost like I'm a bad liar but I'm a good bullshitter. (much laughter)

**You're making it a bit more, can I say, with the times. Your music has kept up very well with what type of things are going on in the underground.**

**Walter:** I think so too. It's like a Ramones record. When the Ramones' first records came out people were blown away. But, to this day people are still blown away by them, it's just in a different way. Then after the Ramones weren't the big thing anymore there were other bands that were the new, hip thing to listen to but in actuality they probably weren't a whole lot different than the Ramones. God bless Joey Ramone, by the way. I think that's why we're sitting here talking. I think that's the way I've done my music: because I've let people know me and know my work. They've seen my various bands and they've seen me grow with my music. I think the reason people like my stuff is because they kind of like me, if you see where I'm going with that.

**I do. Definitely, and I agree. On a similar subject, I've heard it said that if you're still into hardcore at 25 years old then you'll be in it forever. Because let's be honest, there are an awful lot of people who leave the scene when they turn 18 or 21. Do you think Rival Schools can possibly re-capture the audience of people that went to Gorilla Biscuits shows and then dropped out of the scene? Do you think your band can make all those people interested in the underground again?**

**Walter:** I think people that were into Gorilla Biscuits at that time have probably settled into their lives by now. If they even knew about Rival Schools they would think it was cool. They might think it was the band of their old friend that they haven't seen in a long time. I want to be consistent as a person, though. I want to be a person that grows and changes and learns. If I haven't seen somebody in a long time, and I say to them: "Dude, what the fuck have you been doing? How have you been?" Some people might have that kind of feeling, getting to know me again after all these years and that's really cool. I don't really want to be a novelty oldies show or something.

**But, people that might be lawyers or doctors now who probably don't feel comfort-**



**able at a hardcore show—**

**Walter:** They might relate to it. Yeah, of course. I think the interesting thing is that there are kids out there who are like 15 or 16 who are discovering Gorilla Biscuits or Quicksand now, as opposed to 10 or 15 years ago. It means something to them. I understand that, it happened to me too. I hope my music speaks to older kids or younger kids, even if it is in different ways. The older kid might think, "hey, this sounds kind of like Swervedriver or My Bloody Valentine" while the younger kid who is only listening to hardcore would want to check Rival Schools out because of my work in GB and Quicksand, Cache's work in Iceburn, Ian's [Love, guitar in Rival Schools] work in Burn, etc.

**You think the kid that picks up "Start Today" or "Slip" [by Quicksand] today would think your stuff is cool? You don't think they might say, "This sucks, it's too mellow?"**

**Walter:** They might, you're right. Maybe Quicksand is different since there is definitely more texture there, like Rival Schools. But, as I said, I think Rival Schools and GB are so close and I think if a 15 year old kid takes the time to really really listen, he

will see how close it really is to the stuff I played when I was growing up. Honestly, this may make me sound like a dick, but I'm really not concerned. I want people to like my music, but if they prefer my old stuff to my new stuff then so be it. I guess I'm lucky that kids at least like some of my stuff.

**Cache:** I think the main difference lies in that Quicksand is riff rock, while GB and Rival Schools are progression oriented. In Quicksand, the vocals shadow the riffs, but it's not like that with Walter's other two bands. The vocals are much freer and looser when compared to the instrumentation.

**Walter:** Don't tell anyone this, but I've been trying to re-create My Bloody Valentine for like 10 years now! (laughter) I still haven't quite gotten it. But, that's why I was attracted to Ian's playing. He has the technical expertise to make my music sound way more brit-pop than NYHC. The music I listened to in the '90s wasn't grunge but dreampop stuff like Swervedriver, Ride, My Bloody Valentine. I love that shit so much, and I can't quite do it. I actually wanted Kevin Shields to produce our album, but the label said no to that.

**Why did the label say no? It's not like they couldn't afford him.**

**Walter:** It was before the Primal Scream album. I think now they might consider it.

**In My Bloody Valentine, I think the lyrics were treated as just another instrument. There was no message like there was in, say, Minor Threat, to use a tired simile. In My Bloody Valentine they were**





used to heighten the texture rather than to promote an agenda. I think that may be the same thing with Rival Schools.

**Walter:** I think I wrote more straight-forward lyrics for Rival Schools than the lyrics I wrote for Quicksand. In Gorilla Biscuits the lyrics I wrote for Civ were very clear and straight-forward, there was definitely a message there. In Quicksand I felt like they were more poetic and clouded. Again, another comparison to GB and Rival Schools! When I listen to my lyrics for GB I think, "Damn, I was really on to something there." Not to sound arrogant, but I just liked that better so I returned to it for Rival Schools.

**I was actually surprised when I found out that you were producing that Hot Water Music record because their lyrics are so straight-forward and so goal oriented, which was a total departure from Quicksand.**

**Walter:** They wanted me to produce the record because they were huge GB fans. I think of their lyrics like GB lyrics: over the top, uplifting, and positive lyrics. It's like, your life sucks, how are you going to pull out of there? That is exactly what I was thinking about for Rival Schools. To say it in plain English: in GB I said exactly what I meant, no two ways about it. In Quicksand I didn't. Now, I'm back to the start.

**What do you think of the lyrics, Cache?**

**Cache:** Well, I like poetry, and of course I loved Quicksand. But, I was always drawn to classic story telling and even some ways that classic rock could tell stories the way punk doesn't seem to be interested in. But, the poetry I like is all more straight-forward, like in a story telling way. But, the music I've always been drawn to had lyrics that were more personal and introspective. Not necessarily spelling every single thing that the song means out on a page for the world to read, but kind of like not as clouded-- not as muddled. I think Walter's lyrics are great.

**Walter, I've got a quote for you: "What I really wanted to do was take that hardcore energy and put it into something brand new," he recalls. "I wanted to write entire songs that were worth hearing instead of just humoring you until the mosh part came up." What do you make of that?**

**Walter:** I still agree. I discovered how hardcore worked, I think there was a point where I understood hardcore so well that it wasn't challenging me like it once did. It's like a sonnet. You know how to write the form of a sonnet and I knew how to do that really well. I didn't want to do that anymore. I think you're mostly into music when you're a teenager. Even if you don't like music that much, you don't like music at all, you're never going to like music if you don't like it as a teenager. That hardcore energy, which is what I felt when I was a teenager, is the most intense I've ever felt about music. Nothing can compare to that-- seeing the Cro-mags at the Ritz. I felt like I was in Vietnam, it was the sickest experience of my life. Or, Agnostic Front at CBs. I was like, "Dude, there is nothing in the world that I've seen in 16 years that is crazier than this!" At this point in the game 16 year olds aren't coming to our shows as much as they were when GB was playing. Or, even when Quicksand was playing. The hardcore scene is about being 16 years old and wanting to have fun and get your rocks off. Our music isn't as aggressively cathartic as GB or Quicksand. Plus, hardcore is so much more intense than any other music, I think that 16 year olds are more drawn to aggressive music. That's why bands like Slipknot and Limp Bizkit are so big and why you see more 20-somethings at Radiohead shows than teenagers. And that's not bad. I'm not 16 anymore, I don't think like a 16 year old anymore, and I don't expect 16 year olds to automatically relate to what I'm saying. But, when I'm doing a good job, they do. But, if we can get all those people to listen to my music now they might see that it's just as hard and just as cathartic as any of my earlier stuff. The only difference now is that Rival Schools isn't as fast and I hope it's more subtle than the past stuff. I've worked really hard to take all my energy and all my aggression and focus it into a framework that makes for good music, rather than purely beating the hell out of your instruments to get a heavy sound. I think Rival Schools is just as intense as GB ever was. Just in a different way.

**With a band like Hot Water Music, those guys have busted their asses for years now and today they're reaping the profits of that hard work. I know**

**that your previous two bands worked really hard too and toured a lot, but with Rival Schools it seems like success came pretty easily and quickly.**

**Walter:** I think I've always been in cool bands, but honestly I don't think I have ever been in one of those bands that is the hype band of the moment.

**Well, who was cooler than Quicksand or Gorilla Biscuits?**

**Walter:** When GB came out everyone was so into Side by Side. I always felt that we had to work a bit harder to get by. Our music was really good so eventually that's what counts and that's what made us big, but there was a while there where we were lumped into a scene with so many good bands that were already established and already on the map. We had to really work to make anything of ourselves. And then when Quicksand came out there were all those people who were like, "Jawbox this, Jawbox that!" I've always felt like no one has ever been kissing my ass. No one ever liked my bands just because I was in them or because we were pretty good but we had great hair or something. Instead, we just had to work as hard as we could to take what we had and made it shine apart from the rest. I think there are people who like what I, Walter, do, and a lot of those people have been my bread and butter, but I think that when it comes down to it they liked my stuff because of the music rather than just because they like me. Again, back to the Ian Mackaye thing. There are so many people that don't know him, but will buy anything with his name on it just because he has associated himself with so many great projects. In the end, it's what he or I do, not who the hell we are.

**But, with Rival Schools it's an interesting situation, 'cause you were contractually bound to Island Records. So, even if you said, "Now we just want to tour and work hard for years before we put out a record," it probably wouldn't have mattered since you are what your past is.**

**Walter:** I wanted to put out a record, I did, but I wanted to put one out that is meaningful. This is my "career." Music isn't just something I do in my spare time, it's really my job. But, like any skilled worker I take pride in my work and don't want to turn out junk just to produce something. I wanted to do a record I believed in and it helps to have a little extra backing and a lot more money to work with-- so if Island Records wants to give us all that then I'm happy to take them up on it.

**Do you think that might be bad for your street-cred, or what have you, and do you care?**

**Walter:** I'm not worried about street-cred anymore. I've been doing this shit for so long. If people don't think I'm a real person or that I don't do real things then they have no idea what the hell I'm about.

**Cache:** If you want to see street-cred then video-tape our day to day lives.

**Walter:** Yeah, so we're lucky enough to not have day jobs, but we basically get paid what the secretaries get paid at Island. I'm lucky enough to not have to work my ass off in order to make music. I don't owe anybody shit. In the end I'm doing this for me. I'm not doing this to please anyone else, I'm playing music because it's who I am and it's what I do. As far as the major label thing, it's a non-issue. It never has been for me. I'm just lucky here to be playing music after so many years.

**Okay, here's a change of pace: do you need to be in love to write a love song? Do you need to be sad to write a sad song?**

**Cache:** I'll take this. When you write music, you are not re-creating a feeling you have inside. You're trying to imagine what the musical sounds of your life would be. So, when you write music you're imagining what your life is like, really. So, you don't need to be sad to write a sad song since you're just guessing or imagining what it's like to be sad. Same with love.

**Wow, I think that's the best answer I've heard to that question. Thanks guys, that was fun.**

**Walter:** The pleasure was ours.

**Rival Schools can be reached at [www.rivalschoolsunite.com](http://www.rivalschoolsunite.com)**

**Photos by Mike Dubin and Ross**



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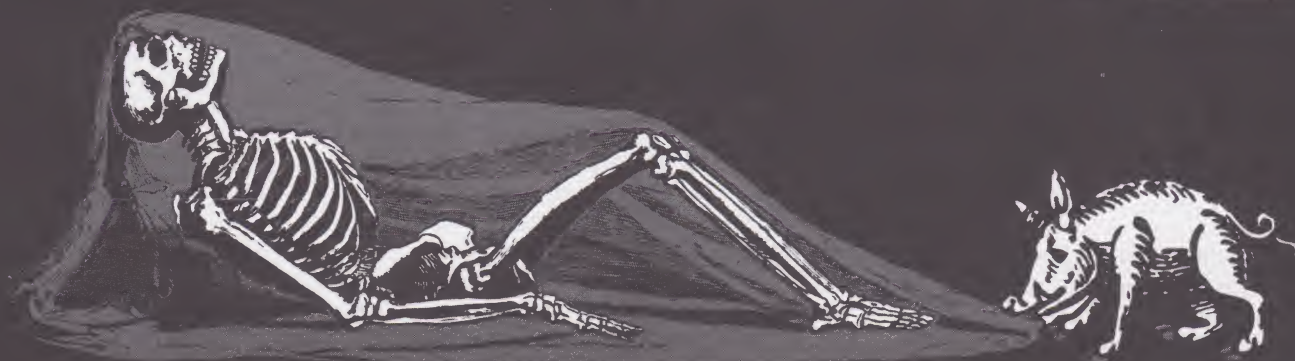


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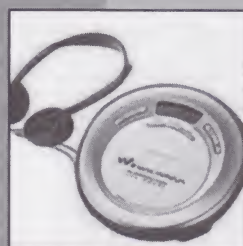
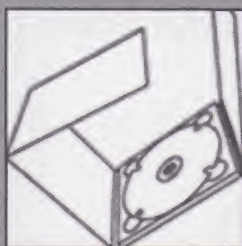
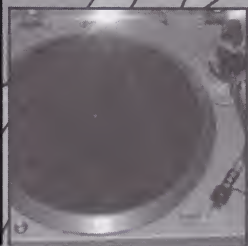
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# International Man of Mastery



*Not another freakin' Napster article.*

We've all heard the arguments: "online file-sharing is illegal distribution of copyrighted material!" "No, most people use it as a preview before they buy CD's!" "CD sales are still rising - Napster has actually helped the majors by exposing their product!"

The fact is that most of the arguments are being made by either major label representatives who are raking it in anyway, or consumers who would rather get music free than pay \$19 a CD. There hasn't been much coverage of independent music, where a 10% drop or rise in sales could make a much bigger difference than at a multi-national.

File sharing would seem to be most threatening to independent musicians, who in most cases have to keep other jobs to support their music habits. I thought that a Napster-induced dip in sales could seriously damage the ability of small labels and lesser-known artists to make a living off of music. But then a few months ago I was at a Death Cab for Cutie show, and I heard something that made me reconsider - a clean-cut, mainstream-looking 30-something guy talking about how great Napster was and that it allowed him to discover Death Cab and other bands, and that's why he was there, buying CD's and other merch. All of a sudden it seemed that this community could really stand to benefit (at least financially) from file sharing. I got curious, started asking questions, and wrote some of the answers down....

So what do the labels think? I found out that the phenomenon has for the most part not concerned them. The effect on sales is negligible, and most of the labels I spoke to said that they haven't even followed the Napster news, because it doesn't affect them. It has elicited a

lot of thought on the idea of music and its place in a capitalist society, and many of the labels I spoke to had a lot to say about that. But all in all, the threats and the opportunities that file sharing has posed have been minimal to independent labels.

First off, calculating the effect of file sharing is impossible. Fluctuations in sales can be attributed to so many different things that you can't really gauge the effect of this one issue that has surfaced, whether kids who got CD's online stopped buying them at shows, or whether kids who might not have ever heard the band's music were exposed to them online and bought the CD because of this exposure. However, all five of the labels I spoke to seemed to think that the overall effect on sales has been really minimal. As Miya from Asian Man Records says, "we are still selling CD's even when people say they heard the music because they downloaded it". And while most of the people I spoke with thought that there was at least some positive effect on sales due to increased exposure, others simply felt that the vast majority of file sharing occurs with music that is more mainstream.

This still remains to be seen. While Napster has, at least in some way, been shut down, there are dozens of other easy-to-use file-sharing programs where you can get a decent variety of free music. I did a little searching myself to see just what is available out there, whether it's for "stealing" or "previewing". While a lot of indie stuff isn't available on a large scale, I was able to find a pretty large catalog of music, including complete albums, for bands on at least three of the five labels I spoke to, and this while using only one file-sharing program. And while it's certain that percentage-wise indie music is less available online than major-label fare, there is indie stuff out there if you look hard enough.

Of course, there are a lot of indications that fans of punk, hardcore, and indie rock just aren't looking that hard. Proposed explanations abound as to why the file sharing that has supposedly hurt the majors has only barely touched the underground. One idea that you hear a lot is that the avid indie music listener is more interested in the tangible parts of the CD, like artwork and lyric sheets. Matt from Polyvinyl agrees: "We put out records that are complete packages. Our artists design and have complete artistic control over their records...I think that our audience knows that and wants to have the complete package".

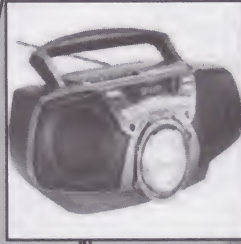
While some other labels agreed, another more compelling idea that came up is simply the sense of community that surrounds the underground. The fact is that kids who listen to indie/punk music have more in common with the bands they support than a fan of the TRL generation. There's a general feeling that fans of independent music will support an artist if they like the music - they won't exploit the people who bring them this music because they know the bands and labels aren't trying to exploit them. Dan from Eulogy said it better: "The mainstream kids don't have the same sense of community that the underground has. When a [mainstream] kid downloads an album, chances are they aren't going to be face to face with the artist or the guys who run the label that night at a show...[our fans] see that we're human. We aren't guys from TV. We do feel the effects of them not buying the CD."

I should mention that nobody really disputed the most obvious reason that the majors are complaining while the independent labels generally aren't - mainly because they're greedy multi-national pigs.

But I think I'll just leave that one alone for now. But while the labels who put out stuff that we listen to aren't whining like their corporate counterparts, they're not



# by Nick Powers



exactly eager for all of their music to be readily available online. They accept it for now, but most do think that it sucks when a kid downloads an album, burns it, and doesn't support the artist that worked his ass off to make quality music, or the label that spent a lot of time and money to bring it to the fans. There are exceptions, especially when a label feels that getting a particular message out there is just as important as getting paid. One employee of a label I spoke to said that while he hopes that their fans will support the bands and their label, "personally I don't really give a shit if people are burning CD's. It's a minority, and our label is just as much about spreading the ideas behind the music as it is about making things function financially." And while most indie labels do find fault with the petty whistle-blowing that the millionaires at the majors are doing (after all, some of the people I talked to did admit to using Napster and others occasionally), they too want to be compensated for their work. As Derek from G7 Welcoming Committee said, "I don't think it's 'right' to be a major label or to want free music from everybody".

I actually wondered if the majority of users out there actually are thinking about where their music comes from - I know I personally think it's "less wrong" to pirate a CD by U2 or Nine Inch Nails than by Sleater-Kinney or Jets to Brazil. Some of the people that I talked to also hinted that they themselves are even more willing to "share" music if it originated on a major label. Ignoring the moral question on this double standard for a minute, could it be that other music fans are applying this same Robin Hood principle and are drawing a line between enjoying a major label's product without paying for it and doing the same thing to a band or a label that is made up of kids like them? Alec from Dischord doesn't think so - "I really don't think most users are politically motivated...I believe that most file sharing goes on between relatively wealthy college students who think free shit is cooler than stuff they have to buy."

So then if users aren't thinking about the issues, will file sharing eventually catch up with the indie labels? Basically, the labels I spoke to don't feel threatened by file sharing as it exists now. But as more file-sharing programs are popping up and more and more music is available online, and internet connections get faster and it takes less time to find what you're looking for, could music piracy become more and more ominous to small record labels? The answer is probably not. Again, most indie labels appear confident that their fans do think about these issues and that as long as the music they're providing to the community is relevant and good, the community will continue to support them.

In economic terms, this basically means that major-label music and indie, punk, hardcore, whatever, are not substitutes. Sure, when kids first discover the underground, they are less interested in the mainstream music and buy less major label music. But just because major label music becomes "free" via file-sharing (which in itself is a fallacy when you consider the investment in hardware needed to get music online, burn CDs, play the CDs adequately on computer speakers, etc), does not mean that punk kids will expect the same to happen to their music. And in the same vein, the fact that mainstream music is readily available "free" while indie music isn't does not mean that the community that has supported our music is going to vanish. In short, while mp3 file sharing may cause major-label fare to become more of a commodity, it probably won't have the same effect on indie stuff.

Alec voiced a concern about what he feels may be the biggest threat brought about by Napster and its clones - "I see the real threat as being corporate greed and a consumer culture that feels entitled to make decisions in this country without the input or consent of the artists they are exploiting...The problem is there is a much bigger issue at hand and as we all squabble about 'label' vs. 'user', what's really happening is that corporations and consumers are redefining what it means for artists to have ownership of and control of their own work."

And it does seem downright scary - the idea that people who know very little about the process of creating music can have so much say in what could prove to be a very crucial time for the future of music. As the ideas of ownership and control over an artists' work are being molded by these changes in technology and the people looking to profit from them, a possible outcome could be that the incentive to make music (and other art) anything more than a hobby is seriously endangered. That wouldn't be good for anyone.

So we're not out of the woods yet. But it seems comforting to know that, so far, this much-hyped technology has done very little to change the way we obtain, appreciate, and support music. And it's equally comforting that the people who work full-time to bring us this music still believe and trust that the punk/hardcore/indie community will, in turn, believe, support, and sustain the labels through the entire process.

*Thanks to Alec from Dischord, Dan from Eulogy Recordings, Miya from Asian Man Records, Derek from the G7 Welcoming Committee, and Matt from Polyvinyl. Please recognize that the views expressed by the individuals in this article are personal views and do not necessarily represent the views of the organizations with which they are associated.*



# Thalia Zedek

... and Gone CD



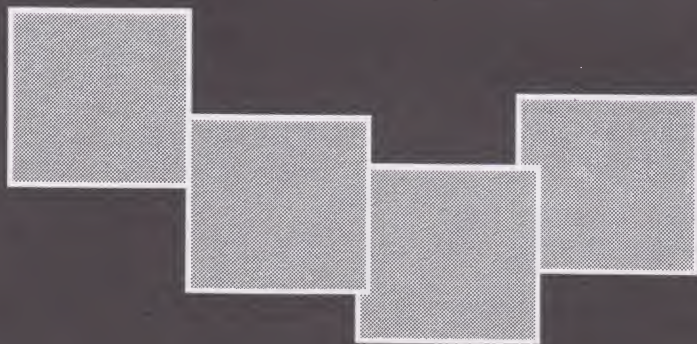
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# *laymen terms* an introduction



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by Jonah





## ***"For me, records are a snapshot of a scene that's always changing, and if they're not changing, they're not real."***

Schizophrenic. Desperate. Experimental. Adjectives can only tell you so much about a band, especially one like D.C.'s finest, the Q and Not U. Guilty by association, the group draws obvious comparisons to Dischord's grandfathers, Fugazi. Hell, Ian MacKaye even produced their record. But Q and Not U have their own distinct personality, be it a disco breakdown, hand-clap-along, or a sudden cry of "D-O-W-N, that's the way we get down!"—all devices that keep us on our toes; and as you can see from reading this interview, they're just getting started. Having recently completed a U.S. tour and now working on the follow up to their well-received full-length, "No Kill No Beep Beep," the Q and Not U are proving that the youth still rule the Dischord roster. As I sat in the group's windowless van outside of the Rotunda in Philadelphia, sweating bullets, we talked about their music, the scene that fostered them, and why the word 'awesome' has gotten a bad rap. So read on, I think it's pretty...uh, awesome.

**So who are you guys?**

**Chris:** I'm Chris. I play guitar and sing.

**Harris:** I'm Harris and I do the exact same thing.

**Could you give a brief history of the band?**

**Chris:** Matt (bass) and I were friends from high school and we wanted to play in a band together since the summer of '98. I had been in a group with John (drums) before that, The Elusive. All of our bands broke up at the same time, we knew Harris as a loose acquaintance, and we all started playing together. I was the only one who knew everybody so it was three strangers and me, trying to hold the posse together. We started playing shows in December of '98. We had keyboards back then...

**Harris:** We were putting on airs.

**Chris:** Exactly. We ended up putting out a three song seven-inch in the spring of 2000, and recorded "No Kill No Beep Beep" in June. We did a U.S. tour in the spring of 2001, and now we're writing songs for our new record.

**You said that you had keyboards when you started, what else was different about your sound? How were you putting on airs?**

**Harris:** It's all the same songs for the most part. There's hardly anything that's been thrown away. It was the adolescence of the band. It was all about trying new things that none of us had done in bands before, then pairing it down to standard instrumentation and expanding on that. I think now we're at the point where we're starting to bring other things in again. We're getting back to how we started, by experimenting with what constitutes this band— but it's after a good growing process.

**Chris:** A lot of times I felt like we wanted to try something that we weren't familiar with, but it wasn't natural. Now I think we can start doing those things. After all this while— almost three years— we're interested in doing some new stuff.

**To prevent further butchering of his name, how do you pronounce Ian MacKaye?**

**Chris:** It's MacKaye, like 'high.'

**Ian recorded your seven-inch and album, what was that process like? Didn't he do a lot of production back in the day?**

**Harris:** Yeah, for all those old hardcore records he was always the producer. Around the time we were getting ready to go into the studio, every record we were listening to, he had recorded: all the Circus Lupus records, Nation of Ulysses, Plan 6. All those early



**not. The songs should always be  
ing you're doing something wrong."**

hardcore records, it was always Ian and Don [Fury].

**Chris:** We were kind of worried because he hadn't recorded with anyone in a while and we had no idea if he was going to do it. It was a real vote of confidence when he was interested. It was totally amazing to have that opportunity. His demeanor in the studio is really easy to get along with. He told us, "We're going in here and we're just making a tape. We're not making a record."

**Were you nervous the first time you had to play in front of him?**

**Harris:** He'd seen us already. We weren't best friends with him at that point, but he's just like anybody else involved in the music scene. He goes to shows all the time, a couple of us play softball with him. He's just Ian, a normal person.

**Chris:** The cool lesson I got out of it isn't that these people who do great things are demystified into chumps, but everyday people are amazing people, who work on the most amazing projects. It makes you believe in people you meet everyday.

**Considering the rich history of the D.C. punk scene, do you think there's a legacy you have to carry on?**

**Chris:** I'm aware that D.C. is part of a context. It's very community oriented and it's been going on for a long time. To say there's no such thing as previous generations of bands would be deceiving ourselves. But at the same time, it's not like when we go to practice we say, "Okay, here we are: Chapter 26 in the Dischord saga."

**Harris:** There are a million great bands in D.C. right now, but you don't see them because of this naïve thinking that 'Dischord is the D.C. scene'—which it never has been. It's a section of it, but there have always been bands outside of it, be it Government Issue, or Velocity Girl, or Unrest—those were all D.C. bands.

**I don't feel like your band really fits that D.C. mold anyway.**

**Chris:** I'd like to and I'd like not to. A really cool thing about punk rock is that there's a community that you share with a group of people. But at the same time, punk rock is founded on this idea that you always have to be on the aesthetic cusp and pushing the envelope. It's a really healthy dichotomy to work in. The things that are going on in our heads right now aren't the things that are going on in the music, so I hope that we keep pushing it harder.

**How do you want to push it harder? Do you have any specific ideas?**

**Chris:** We haven't really thought about it right now. The one thing about this band is everything's a compromise; we're four very different guys with very different musical tastes. We're all pretty acceptive of each other's stuff, but it's the worst thing and it's the best thing. When it doesn't work out you're totally frustrated, but when it comes together it's magic. I feel I'd be nothing without the other three guys I'm playing with.

**What struck me most about your music is the way that you combine different genres ranging from punk to soul into one cohesive unit. It doesn't sound like a bunch of unrelated parts that were haphazardly thrown together.**

**Harris:** I'm very conscious of avoiding that. I've been in a million bands where it's like "we have this awesome part...then we'll go to this other really awesome part!" At practice it seems every good idea we have comes out of a mystical evolution. For me, practice is almost exactly like playing a show, but instead of playing for people in the audience, I'm playing for my band members. It's all about doing something that will blow everyone in the bands' mind, and push them further.

**Chris:** And then they'll blow your mind back.

**Harris:** We're communicating on these awesome levels, I hope.

**Chris:** I don't mean to sound too self-important....

**Harris:** I think these are really common ideas, you know?

**Chris:** Whether it's simple or not, it's something that's really magical to us.

**Since your music is constantly evolving, do you try to play the songs differently than how they are embedded on your recordings?**

**Harris:** Oh yeah, definitely. My personal goal is to play them differently







every night. We just went on this U.S. tour and the first 33 days I was able to play every song differently on every night. On the 34<sup>th</sup> day I couldn't do it, I was completely out of ideas. I was so disgusted with myself.

**Chris:** It's not to the point where the songs aren't recognizable, of course. That's the hard part, because there's still a pattern and form you have to adhere to. It's weird because you want to be free but contained at the same time. It's like, how long of a leash can you get?

**Harris:** Every song that's recorded is just a version. It's what you happen to be thinking about that day. For me, records are a snapshot. The songs should always be changing, and if they're not changing you're doing something wrong.

**When you have to describe your music to someone who has never heard the Q and Not U, what do you say? Do you consider yourselves a punk band or is that too vague?**

**Chris:** I say punk or hardcore. When you say that, it's more the social context of it, and I think when people ask what kind of music you are, they want to know where you fit socially in the spectrum. When people at my work who aren't connected to the scene ask me, I say it's a punk rock or a hardcore band. To them, that means it isn't N'Sync or doo-wop.

**Harris:** or blues-rock....

**Chris:** But at the same time, it's all those things. We're definitely influenced by all those genres, and that's what's really empowering about punk rock. Sometimes it can be regressive, but a lot of things can exist under its umbrella. Punk rock is more of an ethic than it is an aesthetic or style.

*(Their roadie Muddy leaves the van, and yet another member of the Q and not U crawls in.)*

**Chris:** John, identify your voice and position.

**John:** I'm the drummer.

**Do you think your band carries on the punk rock ideals more with your music or your ethics?**

**John:** I think our music is pretty true to the point of what punk is, which is doing what you think is right. It's so hard to say what's punk about music. As far as how we continue the punk thing, I think it's just in the way we operate the band.

**Chris:** Being in control of your art and how you present it, that's what I think punk or hardcore means.

**I've heard you say you're interested in performing for people outside the punk genre as well. How does a fairly uncommercial band like the Q and not U accomplish that?**

**John:** I think just by playing as often as possible.

**John:** You have to love what you're doing. You can't be like, "If we do this for two years, it's going to be awesome." It's awesome now, and we're going to keep doing it as long as it's awesome—for lack of a better word. (laughter)

**Chris:** "Awesome" gets a bad rap though, it's been so surferized! When you see the Grand Canyon it's an "awesome" sight. I think that if you had a very eloquent sentence and you used "awesome" in it, then it would prove you meant it in more of...

**Harris:** The biblical sense.

**Jack:** Hey bra, like Tahoe's awesome....

**Chris:** No! (laughter) 'Bra' is a bad awesome indicator! Our band fully endorses the use of "awesome" as a respectful adjective (laughter).

**Awesome. Do you use any type of electronic instrumentation in your music?**

**Harris:** Guitars are electronic....

**True. I mean in the sense of 'electronica.' Do you consider yourselves to be rock purists?**

**Harris:** Not at all. We're all into music of varying textures and qualities. The only people who get hung up on those types of things are people who are into music as a fashion signifier.

**Chris:** I feel like I'm ready to start messing around with things like samplers and drum machines. Our band is trying to make as many sounds on the instruments we have right now, and when that comes



to an end then we'll start breaking off into other things. We listen to all types of electronic music and I think there are great bands working with those instruments. But especially in the punk scene, the fascination with keyboards from about two years ago to now is really indicative of a struggle to do something new and not really thinking your idea out. We were a part of it too, and we realized that we were just using it to create something different.

**Harris:** I only want to hear bands with keyboards where someone knows how to play piano.

**Chris:** People are just kind of haphazardly using these things, thinking it's going to solve some problems for them, and sometimes it sounds great— don't get me wrong. I just think it shelters some bands from doing their best.

**Chris, in reply to what you just said, do you think you can ever run out of sounds you can create with your guitar?**

**Harris:** I don't think so.

**Chris:** Yeah, I mean...

**I'm not trying to call you out....**

**Chris:** Oh please do, call us on everything! (laughter)

**Harris:** I've been playing for close to 11 years and I'm still fascinated by the guitar. The day I find that I can't come up with something that's new to me— I don't want to say that I'm doing anything new to the world— that's probably the day I'll stop playing. The excitement to me is coming up with new ideas or new ways to approach the instrument.

**Chris:** I agree with that, but on the other hand I don't want it to be this prison for me. If I want to break free from it, maybe I will.

**Who writes the lyrics for your band? Do you all write?**

**Harris:** Whoever's singing.

**I was curious how much of your lyrical content is improvised since the music and words seem to match the overall mood of the song. Do you write the lyrics collectively or individually?**

**Harris:** It's a mixed bag. I tend to sing along while we're writing a song and usually one line will come to me, and I build it from that. For me, it's a good way to work because I feel that line of words came from the creation of that song.

**Chris:** We tend to write the music before we write the lyrics. As far as the words, even in the same songs we don't consult each other on what the words "mean," or anything like that. I think it's really cool that these songs mean different things to each of us. I'm into the idea of this band being four different people and not assimilating to a uniform mindset. Harris just wrote lyrics to this new song we're just playing for the first time this weekend, and this line in it is almost exactly like a line I'd written out to save for something later. We're on a psychic vibe now, man.

**You guys seem like you're not thinking too far ahead.**

**Chris:** We're not thinking much past this weekend, really. (laughter)

**Harris:** I think that's what kills a lot of bands, they're in such a hurry to be a band that they don't want to take the time to be who they are.

**John:** It's a fine balance between that too. You can be laissez-faire about it and never get off your ass. But at the same time, you can also over plan and be like "we're going to be signed to label X by April and then we're going to tour with band X in August." We've struck that balance. (laughter)

**Harris:** It's a good balance of working once in a while and cold chillin' the rest of the time.

**John:** Yeah, we cold chill a good amount.

**Chris:** It's like a swinging pendulum. There are times where it's really intense and we're going crazy. Like this week, we practiced every day and tried to learn all these new songs to get them finished for these shows. I guarantee you next week we're probably not going to meet up. It swings back and forth, and at first that

would really frustrate me, but now I think this rhythm works pretty well.

**John:** I know I get burned out if we do it too much practicing because I want it to be enjoyable. I like writing songs but I don't like practicing them that much. I like when we come home from tour and take a break for a while, then reunite.

**Chris:** Yeah it's really fresh when we all get back together, it's kind of...

**John:** Fresh! (laughter)

**Chris:** You see, fresh is another one of those words! I like it more in the hip-hop sense.

**So what's next for the band?**

**John:** We're gonna play in about an hour, that's it.

**Chris:** The one thing I've learned from this band is that I can't control the future. Right now the old me is going, "Ok, we can get the songs done by November and then record them by December," but that never works. The plan is to keep writing at a pace we're comfortable with, and when we feel we've got it together, then go record them.

**John:** I definitely have a plan that I'd like to stick to, or I should say I have a schedule that I hope we can fit into. I'd like to record an album early next year, get it out in the spring, and tour and all that stuff. I think we can do it, but it might not happen....

**Harris:** It's good to have goals.

**Chris:** Yeah, they're goals not plans. There's no booking agent barking up your tree or a record company that needs you to be on the road to support the record and get the promos out on time....

**Harris:** (in announcer voice) It's got to be in stores for Christmas!

**Chris:** That's not what we're involved with at this point. Maybe we will be in the future so I don't mean to dis on it, but right now it's not what we're interested in.

**You don't have a booking agent?**

**Chris:** No we book ourselves. We did a tour with our friends, Engine Down, and they had a booking agent, but those 10 days were the only shows we haven't booked. The big US tour we just went on for 40 days, John booked the whole thing....

**John:** Me.

**Harris:** It was all John.

**John:** I saw this Oasis thing and the best part is when they ask Noel to describe Oasis in one word and he says "me." (laughter)

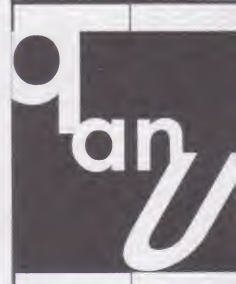
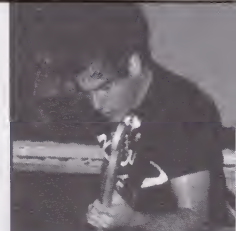
**So for the final question, can you describe the Q and Not U in one word?**

**John:** Fresh.

**Harris:** John.

**Chris:** Awesome.

**Photos by Jonah**





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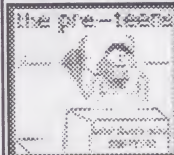


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# Cadillac Blindside

by Ross







Some people would say that Cadillac Blindsight is derivative of their influences. Those people would argue that Cadillac Blindsight have too much Get Up Kids in them for their own good. I would rebut them with the claim that all music is derivative. And, just because two bands sound similar does not mean that one is a) ripping the other off; or, b) not unique in their own way. You see, Cadillac Blindsight of Minneapolis, Minnesota are a pop band that have certain characteristics that Get Up Kids brought to mass attention. But, they are by no means a Get Up Kids rip-off. My honest feeling is that Cadillac Blindsight is so good, that the Get Up Kids could stand to learn a little from them. Their combination of upbeat pop mixed with throaty/snotty vocals and an unusually dark texture to their music (for a pop band, that is) puts them in a league of their own. They are undoubtedly one of the most interesting and creative pop-punk bands out there today. So interesting and unusual that the comparatively more typical sounds of the rest of the Fueled by Ramen Records' roster makes them stand out. With a healthy dose of touring and support this band has been noticed by more than just myself. They're developing a very strong fanbase all over America. But too often Caddy Blindsight gets thrown in with the wrong crowd: they're too dark to fit into a typical pop-punk show, too pop to fit into a hardcore show, and too un-annoying to fall anywhere near the emo category. That is why it should be no surprise that shortly after hearing the band's first full length on Soda Jerk Records I saw them in Berkeley with the Dillinger Escape Plan, Candiria, and Isis-- a strange mix to say the least. Playing first, Cadillac Blindsight easily held their own and I approached them afterwards. They turned out to be three really nice guys and one nice girl who clearly love what they do. I have kept in touch with these fine Minneapolis kids for a while now, and after their new EP *Jonah* and I silently agreed that an interview must be done with this outfit. The problem that I face too often with pop bands is that interviews with them can delve into the ridiculous for far too often pop bands have nothing interesting to say. But, after a talk on the phone with singer/guitarist Zaq Zrust-- who I have come to call my friend-- we both realized a mutual love for '80s music and movies. Zaq even made the bold statement that he was much more influenced by '80s

culture than '90s culture. So, I thought, "Ross, why not ask Zaq how his band can be represented by '80s movies and the music therein?" Everyone knows that movies like *Say Anything* and *Pretty in Pink* and *Saint Elmo's Fire* and *Better off Dead* are more emotional, more poetic, more telling, and more epic than any of the swill we have today. So I did. I think the end result is telling, you just have to read between the lines a bit. Oh yeah, before I called Zaq for the interview I took a shower. Afterwards, I had no intention of putting on clothes while sitting around my apartment alone. So, I did the interview while nekkid. To my surprise, Zaq was clothed simply in a towel (he had just gone swimming). For the record, we did not have phone sex. We did, however, agree that lone Skye is the most beautiful woman ever to grace the silver screen.

So, who do we have here today?

Zaq Zrust.

Where is your name from Zaq?

It's really weird 'cause I have Irish and Sicilian in my family and it just came out of that.

So, are there people in the Mafia in your family (no pun intended)?

(laughter) On my mom's side there are some sketchy people.

So, that means if you weren't in a band but in the Mafia then you could have been a made man.

Yeah, I could have been made.

Cool!

Actually, wait, I couldn't have because I have Irish in me and you have to be full blooded Italian to be made.

I'm full Jewish/Eastern-European, so I couldn't have been anything.

You couldn't have, no.

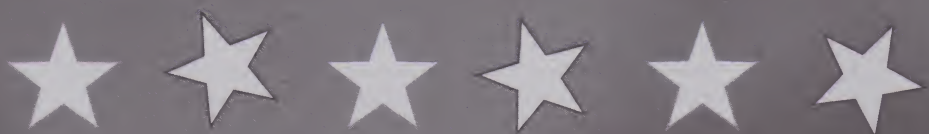
Okay, so which do you want first, '80s or '90s?

Let's go '80s.

Okay, so you know how the movie *Say Anything* had "In Your Eyes" and *Pretty in Pink* had "Don't You Forget About Me"? If you guys did the main song to a movie in the '80s, who would star in it and what would happen?

You'd gotta go with John Cusack as the star of the movie, because he's the man. What would happen in the movie? Well, our style of music we





play probably wouldn't have gone over well in the '80s. But definitely John Cusack and his sister Joan would be in it, 'cause she's in every movie he does.

**She wasn't in *Better off Dead*.**

You're right, I think that was one of the ones she didn't get in on. It would be a classic John Cusack '80s movie where he falls in love with a girl, she's dating the head football player, and he's the underdog—the geek in school. They meet somehow. I'm going to go with a scenario of she got her period at school during prom and it got all over her prom dress. John Cusack would be the hero who came and saved her and put his coat around her or something. Then they'd fall in love because he saved her of having blood all over her dress and her legs.

**That's disgusting by the way.**

Yeah, but they'd get it on in a station wagon by a park. At some point in the movie she would die. It wouldn't be your classic '80s happy movie. Let's see, what could be left behind? Oh, I've got it: she gets pregnant and has the kid. She dies giving birth to the kid, then John and the kid go off together in the end.

**This is more like *Parenthood* or *Terms of Endearment* than it is *Say Anything* or *One Crazy Summer*.**

Well, you don't want to be cliché. They could just go to Europe together at the end.

**Been done before.**

True, but that would at least give some sense of resolution and I think Cadillac Blindside's songs are often about resolving something. The reason I picked that story to represent our music in movie format is kind of complicated so you'll have to bare with me. Our music isn't all about girls but more about social frustration. Maybe being the geek in high school, although that's not what our songs are about. Social frustration as far as not knowing what to do, not knowing where to go, not knowing how to handle people you dislike in your scene even though you're supposed to get along since you're in the same place at the same time. The girl thing, well, I think most of us have had our shares of getting screwed over... at least me and James have. The kid thing because I think everyone at some point knocks up somebody, although I don't think any of us have.

**You're pretty sure you've never knocked up anybody.** (much laughter)

Yeah, I'm pretty sure. I'm pretty positive. As for the dead girlfriend, we

have this ongoing thing with death and gore involving our artwork and our imagery. We're trying not to be the same cheesy indie rock band as everyone else. It's not really how we are.

**It's clear from listening to your two CDs and listening to the '80s version of the movie that would represent your story that you are not your average pop band. You're much darker.**

Yeah, we try to do that. We try to be a bit different and I think being sort of macabre is just one of the ways we are a bit different from the rest of the pack. We do it with artwork, we do it with lyrics, and I think we do it in the way we construct our songs.

**That brings me to my next question: do you think the kind of social isolation that all the members of the *Breakfast Club* had internally is akin to the kind of social frustration in your songs?**

Definitely. I think that's probably a pretty good movie to portray such things. Everyone has their own backgrounds. Becky would be—what's her name? The girl who played the freaky girl? Oh yeah, Becky would be Allie Sheedy since she's always been a bit of a tomboy. She plays drums and plays sports which aren't often thought of as lady-like. But she was also in ballet and she can tap.

**That's more like Molly Ringwald.**

Good point. She kind of has that introverted, rebel part like Ally Sheedy's character and she kind of has that girly-girl attitude of Molly Ringwald. Trent was the brain, so he would be Anthony Michael Hall. He's the one that is super smart in the band. He went to college—and dropped out after like half a semester. He was the super smart kid who kind of kept to himself. James is hard to place. He was the kind of guy that everyone liked. He wasn't a jock but he wasn't a real outsider either.

**He wasn't Emilio Estavez and he wasn't Judd Nelson, then.**

Well no, he wasn't. I'm more of a mix of those two characters, actually. I was captain of the football team but at the same time I was the kid who played sports yet I listened to punk music. I have a picture of me in the year book, since I was homecoming king—

**Wow!**

But, in the picture I had a mohawk. The picture of me I have a blue mohawk—I used to be a lot more punk rock looking—but I was wearing a Letterman jacket at the same time. James is tough, though, 'cause he got along with everyone.





**If you had to place James in another movie from the '80s what would it be and who would he be?**

You could almost say John Cusack from *Say Anything*. As I said, everyone liked him but he still had his doubts about the world.

**Now, how do you think *the Breakfast Club*, or another angsty teen isolation movie from the '80s, represents your music?**

They all end happy and that kind of throws me off. We're not a happy band. I think the big blowup fight scene in the *Breakfast Club* is us. We have definitely had that a few times. To an extent I see my band as us against the world, like me and my schoolmates against the basketball coach or what have you. Our whole thing is to try to stand out but without trying to. We realized right away that as soon as me and James started writing songs together we were doing things a little different. We could hear certain characteristics of other bands in them but nothing quite right on the mark. If we were in separate bands, my band would be a lot more Dillinger 4-esque and his would be more Getup Kids. We were doing things a bit differently and we figured that out right away, so we tried to figure out stuff we could do that would tweak it a bit more and make us stand out a lot more. Ross, you haven't seen us in a while but we have these big steel candle holders and usually when we play we only have candle light now.

**That's almost like Ferris Bueller. He does things differently than the rest of the world.**

Yeah, but the important part is not standing out for the sake of standing out, but just realizing that you're a bit different.

**Here's a question for you. Spur of the moment. I have this theory that everyone has had a relationship where they are Ferris—the person that can do anything and does everything with style—and everyone has been Cameron—the person who thinks life sucks and that Ferris gets everything he wants. The world does what Ferris wants, but nothing ever works out for Cameron. Which one is more akin to your music?**

Hm, I'd probably say Cameron just for the sense of that we've been doing this a really long time. Things have been moving along really slowly, and we're okay with that but it is frustrating. At the same time we're not letting it completely kill our spirit. We feel that as long as we believe in what we're doing then everything will work out in the end. We sometimes discuss changing our style or changing our image in order to enhance any sense of coolness or in-ness we might have. But in the end we don't and we stick with what we've been doing the whole time. We don't fit into a label or a genre. The second we do that then we're not going to be a good band. In the end, it's the world against you—like Cameron. For Ferris, the world was at his back and they did whatever he wanted them to do. He was loved and admired, and he was successful because of that without ever really doing anything that warranted being successful. Cameron, on the other hand, never had anything easy and never had anything handed to him on a silver platter. But, he kept on keeping on and tried his best and in the end things worked out for him. As soon as you think nothing is going to work out it always will.

**Do you ever see any bands that seem to be on the Ferris side of the relationship?**

Do you want me to name names?

**It's up to you.**

I don't really want to throw any names out, but there's a local band that everything has really clicked for them. Without them really trying they got all the right shows, the right people saw them right away, and they had fans after playing like 3 shows. They're a good band, but in a way I look at it and I feel really good for them. It's kind of unfair from our perspective but sometimes that's just how the dice fall. The trick is not letting it get you down.

**Cool. Next question: why is *Say Anything* so good?**

Good question, and there are a few reasons. First, the soundtrack is awesome. It's Peter Dinklage, a Clash song—'cause John Cusack is a huge Clash fan—I think there's a Stiff Little Fingers song on there. Secondly, there's the story line: getting the girl that no one ever thought you'd get. Against the odds, against the will of her father, of her friends, of her financial situation.

**Again, us against the world. I'm beginning to notice a theme here. (laughter)**

Yeah, we're bitter! (laughter)

**So, which '80s teen idol represents each one of you in Cadillac Blind-**





side?

Wow, that's tough. I know the others will get mad at me for fucking up which pop-culture teen idol they would be. Okay okay, I'll start with me. I would go with Mr. T for me because we're both very large black men. (laughter) Because I don't take any shit from anybody and it gets me in trouble from time to time. And, the way I got into the Minneapolis scene is very similar to how Mr. T got into acting. It's very circumstantial. I got really drunk and ended up at a party at a really crappy warehouse in Minneapolis and happened to meet people who were playing music. Our original drummer, Brian, I met there. Mr. T won the best bouncer award in either NY or LA in some contest. Because of all the gold chains someone noticed him and put him in Rocky and the A Team and stuff.

**Okay, let's skip the rest of this question because your band mates might take offense. Why don't you tell me what song from an '80s movie you wish you had written yourself.**

One of my favorite songs of all time is actually "In Your Eyes" by Peter Gabriel. But I never could have written that. I really wish I had written the song at the dance in *Better off Dead*. There is a girl singing the "Better off Dead" song and it's amazing. It's sung by Dottie from *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*. It's such a great song. Oh, but the best line from an '80s movie was in there as well when Charles Demar, who will always be known as Booger, (laughter) said: "Do you know what the street value of this mountain is?" on that snowy mountain. Comic genius.

**Well, how about this: what '90s teen idol are you closest to?**

The thing about the '90s movies is that not only do they all suck but all the guys are jocks. In the '80s it was like the loser, the underdog, triumphs over the jocks. Nowadays it's the jock either getting the cheerleader girl or proving to the dork-girl that she can be a cheerleader if she puts on this mini-skirt. (laughter) Plus the way punk was treated in '80s movies was cooler too.

**Yeah, in every John Cusack movie you had the Clash or the English Beat or something and now in '90s movies the biggest it gets is a Blink 182 song in *American Pie* or *Save Ferris* will appear at a dance scene. It sucks. The '80s were way cooler, no doubt about it.**

Yeah, the guys in the '90s are also alterna-geeks too. They wear lame clothes and look like that guy in your class whose claim to fame is that he has a Modest Mouse CD in his discman. In the '80s the guy characters were legit. Have

you seen *Singles*?

**Yeah, I saw it on the first date I ever went on. The soundtrack actually has an amazing Pearl Jam song called "State of Love and Trust."**

Wow, the zine editor likes Pearl Jam. Bold statement. (much laughter) But seriously, at the very least that movie actually used punk and underground rock kind of well. It was a dumb movie but at least it was focused around sort of cool music as opposed to really lame music like Limp Bizkit or something. Yes, it is generally agreed that the '80s best represents our band.

**Here is the question that might very well be the definitive question of the interview: if Jennifer Love Hewitt and Rachel Leigh Cook got in a fight, who would win?**

Wait, who is Rachel Leigh Cook again?

**She was in *She's All That* and *Josey and the Pussycats*.**

I'm going to go with Rachel Leigh Cook, Ross. First, because she's from Minnesota and we kick everyone's asses. And secondly, because Jennifer Love Hewitt is a whiney little bitch.

**Yeah, I see what you mean.**

I haven't seen too many interviews with Rachel Leigh Cook, but in the interviews J-Love is an annoying, immature loser. I honestly see Rachel Leigh Cook pushing J-Love, J-Love starting to cry, and then Rachel Leigh Cook breaking her over her knee or punching her in her face.

**If there's a song from any decade out there that would be a good soundtrack to that fight, what would it be?**

Easy. LL Cool J: "I'm Gonna Knock You Out."

**Good one.**

It has the hip urban rhythm, but at the same time it's these two girls from the suburbs and malls of America. The fight and the LL video could be juxtaposed over each other perfectly.

**What is the best song from a '90s movie?**

*Cruel Intentions*: "The Freshman" by the Verve Pipe. It's a great movie, 'cause it has Buffy as the slutty bitch, and at the scene it happens in in the movie it works really well. They find the cocaine, they find out that she's a devious bitch and her life crashes down around her: all by the newcomer, the freshman.

**Thanks Zaq, that was really fun.**

Yeah, I had a great time.





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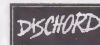
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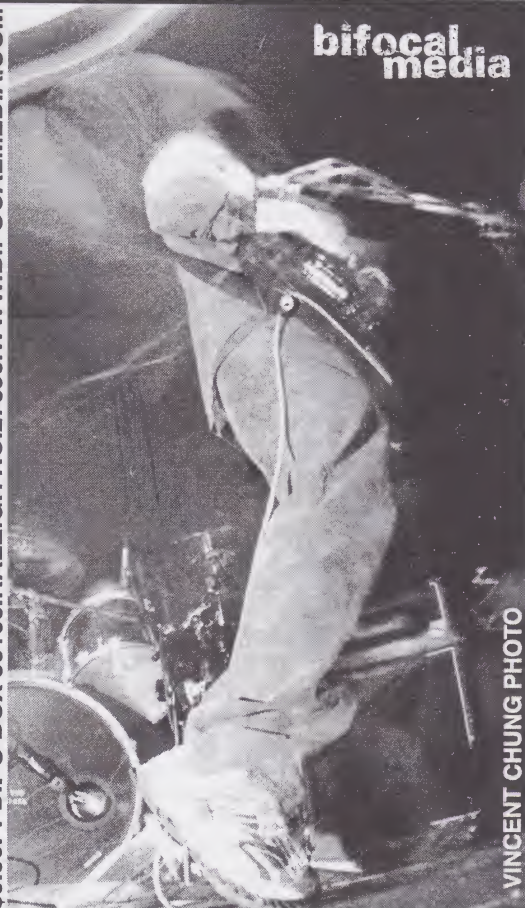
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## Misleading Movie Ads: What the studios don't tell you...

Let's face it, people. Hollywood executives are sneaky, conniving folk running a cut-throat industry intent only on squeezing every last buck from the movie-adoring public through any means possible. For the film studios, getting moviegoers to shell out \$10 per flick must be like taking candy from a baby (read: terribly easy and terrific fun but not a very good way to make lasting friends). Clearly, there is a peculiar love-hate relationship between consumers and Hollywood in which neither side can live without the other despite such mutual feelings of revulsion and loathing that haven't been seen since Crest® shelved its "Cavity Creeps Vs. Crest® Fighters" ad campaign more than a decade ago. However, even before the days of animated bacteria and cleansing abrasives, the public has been humbly swallowing the near exponential increase both in ticket prices and horrendous films with little or no regard for alternative outlets of entertainment.

Indeed, in a recent independent survey conducted outside a New York movie theater around the corner from this reporter's apartment, a staggering 75% of the 4 people polled while waiting to purchase tickets to the premiere of *Crazy/Beautiful* were unaware that their \$10 could also buy them a one-way bus ticket to Winnipeg. (Perhaps more astounding was the 25% of the survey's participants who had just arrived in New York from Winnipeg to "see Kirsten Dunst on an authentic big screen and then go to a supermarket to laugh at America's feeble selection of pork products.") How is Hollywood able to so easily dupe consumers into paying such prices for any movie, good or bad, and still keep them in the dark about such entertainment substitutes as moving to the capital of Manitoba? Two words: deceptive shenanigans.

That's right. After months of research and sleuthing, the tireless staff at LOI Undercover has stumbled upon some remarkable findings, uncovering highly classified industry secrets which reveal that Hollywood's publicity gurus, for years, have been manipulating the words of objective film critics to produce flattering promotional advertisements that are nothing but wily distortions of the truth. The following damning evidence speaks for itself.

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(The Deep End: "I loved it!" Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun Times.)

Yeah right! The only 3-word sentence this portly fellow knows is "Extra mayo, please." The folks at Fox Searchlight have cleverly edited an excerpt from Mr. Ebert's film review which originally read, "I loved

it about as much as I loved it when the popcorn-buttering machine was taken away for servicing, which is to say that I hated it and threw a temper tantrum in the lobby screaming, 'Don't subject me to this kind of

torture!'" When Mr. Ebert caught wind of Fox Searchlight's antics, he immediately contacted LOI Undercover and implored us to help him expose their fraudulent advertisement. After a heated bargaining session lasting upwards of eight hours and involving a flurry of back-and-forth epithets related to his considerable girth and our lack of a television show named after ourselves, we finally came to an agreement that LOI Undercover would reveal Fox Searchlight's heinously duplicitous maneuver in exchange for Mr. Ebert's permission to let us make public the fact that he does not know what the word 'duplicitous' means.

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**"This toon is TRIPPIN!"**

(Osmosis Jones: "This toon is trippin'." Bill Bregoli, Westwood One Radio)

Granted, Westwood One Radio is not the paragon of elite journalism, yet the exceptionally colloquial nature of Bregoli's comments prompted LOI Undercover to investigate the reviewer himself. It turns out that Bregoli was the most senior employee at Westwood One where he had been cleaning the toilets for 20 years until he disappeared the same week Osmosis Jones was released. His body was found in a dumpster behind the Warner Bros. studio lot with a fistful of partially smoked joints

and headphones duct taped to his head while a mix tape with 30 versions of Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit" was still playing on auto-reverse. After learning of the incident in an LA newspaper, the remaining members of Jefferson Airplane immediately contacted Bregoli's family and requested the rights to his story in order to supplement the footage for their less than eagerly anticipated upcoming feature on VH-1 "Where Are They

**THE CRITICS ARE RAVING ABOUT 'GHOST WORLD'**

★★★★★

Glenn Kenny/PREMIERE Andrew Johnston/US Weekly  
Roger Ebert/CHICAGO SUN-TIMES Gene Seymour  
Jeffrey Anderson/SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER Liz Brant  
Rob Stewart/LA DAILY NEWS Peter Howell/TORONTO

**"TWO THUMBS UP!"**  
EBERT & ROEPER AND THE MOVIES

**"A WHIP-SMART COMEDY, A SURPRISE GEM."**  
Loeh Rosen, PEOPLE MAGAZINE

**GHOST WORLD**

EXCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENTS NOW PLAYING

**"TWO THUMBS UP!"**  
**EBERT & ROEPER AND THE MOVIES**

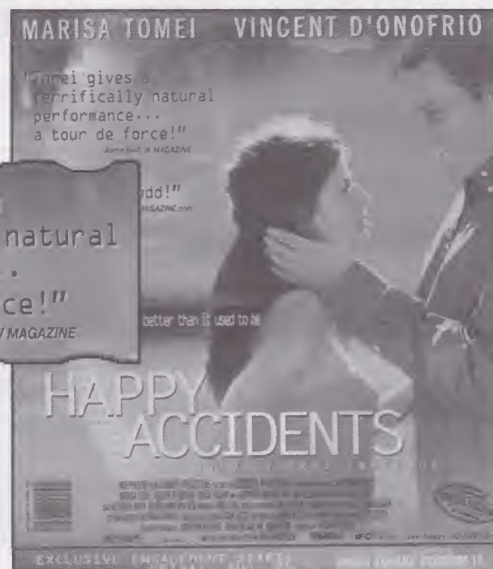


Now?" Fortunately for contingent of unemployed slackers everywhere who are forced to watch VH-1 daytime programming, Jefferson Airplane also contacted the LAPD to request the rights to the partially smoked joints and were promptly arrested, resulting in VH-1's cancellation of the planned episode.

(*Ghost World*: "Two Thumbs Up!" Ebert and Roeper and the Movies)

Once again, the words of film criticism's elder statesman have been monkeyed with to produce a distinctly laudatory tone while masking the true intent of Ebert and Roeper's signature gesture. LOI Undercover was able to obtain the tape of this episode which was quickly shelved without being aired after the producer failed to give the two men a countdown just before the end of a commercial break, and the camera inadvertently caught Mr. Ebert leaning across the theater aisle and quietly nibbling Mr. Roeper's earlobe. The tape then reveals a shocked and startled Mr. Ebert desperately attempting to assert his masculinity and he blurts out, "Boy, would I love to shove my two thumbs up the child actresses who star in our next film, the lovely and entertaining coming of age movie, *Ghost World*." After the show's final segment is completed, the camera conveniently continues to roll and catches Mr. Ebert berating his staff with epithets related to their lack of television shows named after themselves. Mr. Ebert is also heard using the word 'duplicitous' incorrectly 17 times.

"Tomei gives a terrifically natural performance... a tour de force!"  
-Aaron Gell, W MAGAZINE



(*Happy Accidents*: "Tomei gives a terrifically natural performance....a tour de force! Aaron Gell, W Magazine.)

Marisa Tomei's performance a tour de force? Something's fishy here. A writer for W Magazine knows French? That's downright ludicrous! However, despite our best hunches, this quote turned out to be completely legit and unaltered, but we certainly didn't let that minor detail deter us from snooping further. Indeed, when we switched to Plan B and had Mr. Gell stalked...Presto! Mystery solved. It turns out that Mr. Gell is racquetball buddies with a certain Gary Tomei, otherwise known as Marisa's birth father! What's more, after secretly monitoring their recent matches, our inside source at the Bel-Aire Racquet Club sent us transmissions indicating that Mr. Tomei has lost 23 consecutive games despite what his reports describe as Mr. Tomei's 'vicious backhand stroke' and Mr. Gell's 'debilitating lazy eye and two left feet.' It doesn't take the laziest of lazy eyes, Columbo, to figure out what's going on here: Mr. Tomei, a far superior sportsman to Mr. Gell is clearly conceding the matches in a form of reciprocation for a certain glowing movie review.

Furthermore, while the two men used to play 3 times a week, they've cut back their routine to twice a week of late, and Mr. Gell has been seen regularly entering the Santa Monica Foreign Language Institute on his recently freed-up afternoon, where he was no doubt learning how to spell such French phrases as 'tour de force.' To confirm our suspicion, we spoke with Gell's instructor, Blanche Devereux, who informed us that he had indeed added the said phrase to his vernacular, but only after weeks of struggling to differentiate between a 'tour de force' and the 'Tour de France.'

"When Mr. Gell kept insisting that Antonio Banderas was a 'Tour de France,' I just figured that it must have been some kind of euphemism for 'gaylord,'" Devereux confessed. "You know how those scrawny cyclists all shave their legs and wear such short shorts with taut little pink and yellow nylon shirts. I mean, come on now. It takes a certain type of fellow to sit on a plastic bike seat every day for a month."

Having heard much more than we needed to crack this peculiar case of Marisa Tomei's acting abilities being praised, we were forced to concede that, much to our chagrin, Hollywood was in no way involved in this gross misrepresentation of the truth, but rather this was a simple case of 'you scratch my back, I'll prop up the dead-end career of your no talent daughter.'

(*Rush Hour 2*: "The best special effects of the summer ARE Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker!" James Verniere, Boston Herald.)

Ahh, here we get back to the old familiar pattern of corporate deception, as this simple yet crafty job by New Line Cinema's PR goons truncates Mr. Verniere's words to eliminate his minor objection

with the film, namely his immense dislike for it: "The best special effects of the summer ARE Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker! Honestly, I don't know how they did it, but these two atrocious actors somehow managed to create the same movie twice! Has anyone checked to see if they are in fact live actors and not computer-generated effects called 'illiterate yet gymnastic Asian man' and 'sassy bug-eyed black man'?"

by Jon Orren

"The best special effects of the summer ARE Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker!"

-James Verniere, BOSTON HERALD





# BUILT TO SPILL

by Sarah A. Sternau



Before I had to interview Doug Martsch of Built to Spill, I had heard that he was a bad interviewee. Not mean, not intentionally difficult, just not good. So I did my homework and tried to make things interesting in advance, which for me oftentimes means putting together a list of questions that range from intentionally open-ended, almost philosophical questions about making music to reportorial, rumor-based questions designed to be asked interrogation style. To make sure I had all the bases covered, I even had a personal message to deliver: a friend's band had toured with Built to Spill in the not too distant past, and I was to communicate a "hail, fellow" on the friend's behalf. Armed with questions on everything from the process of recording *Ancient Melodies of the Future* and Martsch's rumored-to-be-dismal solo material to his feelings on electronic music and touring-I had even scripted opening chit-chat about the fact that when I finished our conversation I would be unplugging the phone, putting it in my Ryder truck and moving to Seattle, the city that likes to claim him as its own-I dialed the phone and discovered that no amount of preparation would have actually prepared me for the interview. Martsch just isn't forthcoming. At all. I couldn't loosen him up or wait him out or make him laugh. I considered trying to make him angry, but couldn't muster the sentiment because he's not at all a bad guy. And therein lies the problem: he's too nice, too humble, and too little in need of print publicity like this to need to force himself to be something he's not. He's a talented musician, and for him-and for me, as my list of fifty questions resolved themselves into the thirty I couldn't ask and the twenty I did-that was good enough. But next time.... I've got your number, Mr. Martsch (literally) and next time you're not getting off so easy.

I've heard rumors that this is the last Built to Spill record.

I don't think that's true. We're going to take a little break after we're done touring, but I don't think we're planning on stopping forever.

**How ready are your songs when you go into the studio?**

That depends on what the song is. Some are more ready than others. This time when we went into the studio everything was ready, except I didn't have a lot of ideas yet for overdubs. But the basic chord progressions, drums and bass, and most of the lyrics had already been figured out. It was just a matter of putting in percussion and lead guitars and that kind of stuff.

**Sounds like you make sure you've got all the layers you want....**

I just count on it taking a month to record and a couple of weeks to mix, and that's plenty of time to get done what needs to be done. That's a lot of time away from home, but it's my job. You've got to do it right if you're doing it.

**Are you afraid of taking the show on the road with all the experimentation that you do in the studio?**

I always felt like live it was a different thing. There was a different kind of energy to it that isn't in the studio. I don't think that things need to sound like records when you play live. I always thought that there was a different energy-and a lot of volume-that makes up for the instruments that aren't there.

**Is there anything that you won't play live?**

There are things that we haven't played for different reasons.

**What sort of reasons?**

I guess songs that are hard to sing.

**Which is the hardest song that you have to sing?**

I think a song like "Cleo." We never play it live, because it relies on there being multiple vocal things going on, and I've always wanted to be the only singer live. There are a few people in our band that can sing, but for some reason I always wanted to keep it simple that way.

**So it's a matter of simplicity?**

I don't know. I just don't want to mess around with it, with someone trying to learn it, with practice and all that kind of stuff.

**Do you do a lot of practicing before tour?**

Yeah, we live in different towns, so everyone will show up and practice for a while before

we do anything. The guys will come down maybe ten days before we head out-Scott and Jim from Seattle-and we'll practice a few hours a day. We want to have a lot of songs learned because we're going to be playing multiple dates in cities. We try to mix up our sets enough that if people decide to come different nights they'll be able to see a different set.

**Do you ever do any covers?**

Yeah, we've done that, but I don't think we're going to on this tour because I want to play so many songs, and we're not going to be touring for a while after this. But yeah, we usually go out with a cover or two.

**How do you choose those?**

Oh, just randomly. The last things we did were an Ozzy Osbourne song and a Macy Gray song; whatever sounds good to us at the time.

**Do you ever miss the days of having a revolving lineup?**

Kind of. There are some things that I liked about that, but especially getting ready to go on tour it's nice to have a solid lineup. I know what I can expect from people in the band-how they play and that sort of thing. It's a lot of work trying to build chemistry between a group of people. But there are times that I wish that things were less predictable, and that I didn't know what the people I'm playing with are going to do.

**For the purpose of writing songs or working in the studio?**

Any kind of music making, or playing live, or practicing, or whatever. Everyone has a way of playing, and you come up with new ideas, but there's a basic parameter around what you do, what you return to.

**What do you think of electronic music or the club genre in general? I've heard a statistic that says there are more turntables sold than guitars.**

I definitely don't believe that. That's funny. I don't know. I don't really care at all.

**It doesn't tempt you?**

Not really. I thought that it was interesting at one time, and I like it in theory, but I haven't really ever been moved by any DJ music. It looks good, it sounds good, but there's not much substance to it.

**What do you think gives substance to rock music that's lacking in electronic music?**

Maybe it's just the human touch; the way that a human can manipulate an instrument and you know a person is doing it. That's something that's missing from [electronic music]; it's intangible, but it does have an effect on your nervous system.

**You have a publishing deal with BMG. Have any of your songs been used in anything?**

There are some skateboard videos that have used our songs, and I guess they've been in a few low-budget movies and stuff, but nothing big.

**Do you have an interest in seeing your music in different places?**

Not really. If I really like what someone's doing, I would definitely like to be involved in that. They're making a *Mr. Show* movie and if they wanted to have something that would be cool, because I'm a big fan. When we first signed to Warner Bros., there were a lot of movies that wanted music from us, but they were all really bad things like *Biodome* and *Mallrats*, and I wasn't into having our music in weird movies like that.

**Is your audience generally younger or older, nowadays?**

There's both. I've been really happy that there are lots of kids coming to our shows; we try to play all ages wherever we go. But it always sort of surprises me that young kids like us. I feel like we're older people, and imagine that we're more for people my age, but it's nice that lots of kids go to our shows. When I feel like we've been around for along time and people are done with us, you find out that someone's just discovered us.

**You make it sound like you just fell off a dinosaur somewhere. How old are you?**

31.

**That's not that old.**

It's pretty old when you're sixteen. (Awkward silence)

**Is interviewing a tedious process for you?**

No, but I don't have anything that I need to tell anyone.

**Photos by Sergio Cilli**



# THE PLUS ONES

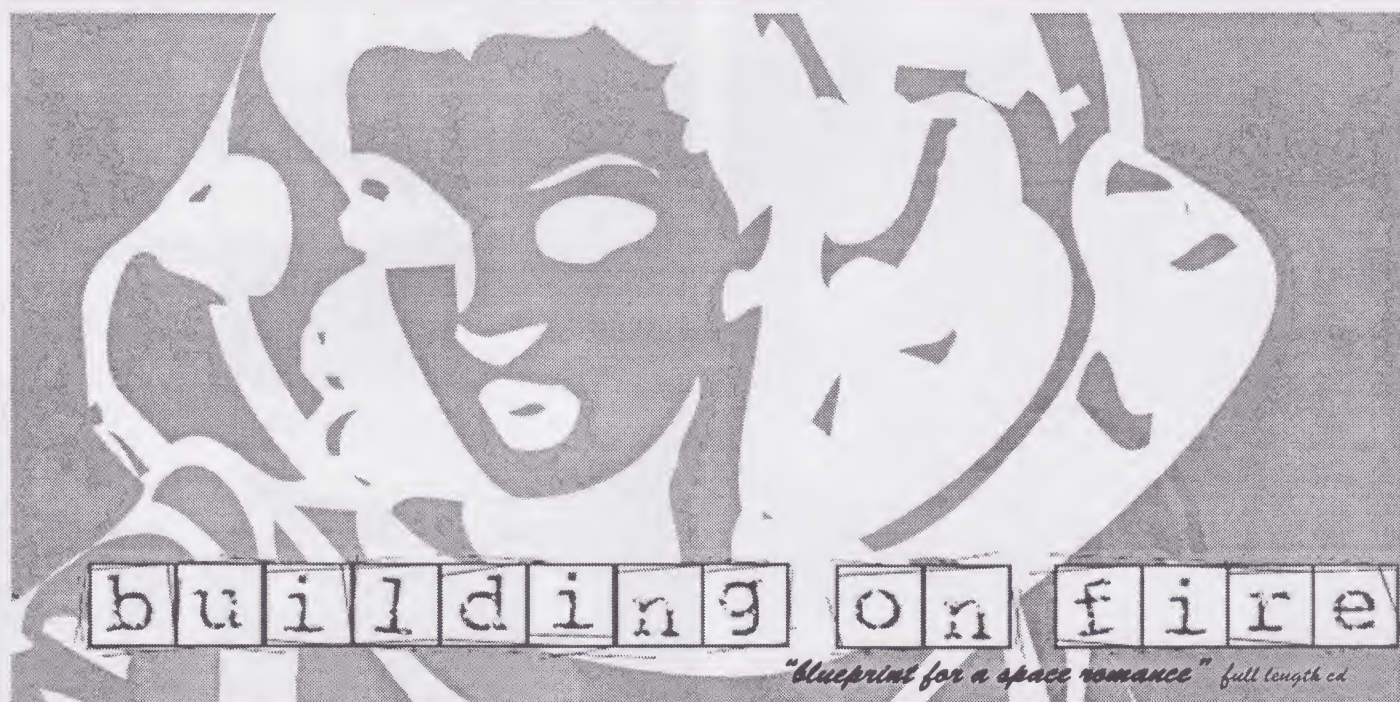
New to Asian Man Records are the Plus Ones. Hailing from the East Bay, this 4 piece power pop band have been rocking the bay area scene for the last few years. They have done one national tour with the Donnas and have an ep out on coldfront records. Coming to stores on August 14th are 3 new songs from the Plus Ones. This will be part of a split with the Travoltas. It is cleverly titled "GOING DUTCH"... You can mailorder it from Asian Man for \$5 bucks or go to your friendly neighborhood punk rock store and buy it there. It is now July 2001 and the band will begin working on their full length release due out early next year. So check the band out if you haven't before and get ready for the Plus Ones to start touring everywhere. <http://www.plusones.net>



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# ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT

by Ross





My first contact with Rocket from the Crypt was around 7 years ago when I saw them perform on one of those MTV Spring Break things. The show was being filmed in San Diego that year, and who better to perform than the town's biggest and best underground act. I'm not sure if they had signed to Interscope at that point, but I thought they were great. For the next few years I didn't hear a note from them, even though "they were always poised to be the next big thing", as my friend Tim says. Unfortunately their major-label debut never broke through to the mainstream and I again lost touch with them. I did see the seminal Drive Like Jehu-- for whom John played guitar-- when I was 17, which from what I hear is a pretty big deal. All I know is that they added to an already impressive resume for the guy. When I went to college I met a guy who passionately sang the praises of Rocket as I would later hear many others do as well. He had a Rocket from the Crypt tattoo, the belt buckle, and followed them with near Greatful Dead-like devotion. So, when I found out that Vagrant Records would release their first record in three years this year, I was excited.

Rocket from the Crypt is a band that has seen a lot in their ten year-plus existence. From indie rock success to major label obscurity, they are finally ready to reclaim their throne as the premiere rock and rollers of the the punk community. Similarly, their singer, John Reis, has done a lot as well. Tracing his career is like tracing the roots of many of the bigger styles of independent rock these days. His pioneering emo-core band Drive like Jehu was a force to be reckoned with as is his Rocket side-project, Hot Snakes. Not only does Mr. Reis put on what is undoubtably one of the best shows anyone in punk is capable of, but his songs are catchy, anthemic, and fucking fun as hell. I got a chance to sit down with John recently to talk about some of the different aspects of his very impressive career and his very impressive bands. One thing I can say about John is that he is easily one of the more articulate and thoughtful people I've ever interviewed. He doesn't take his band or himself too seriously, and he is dedicated to having good clean fun above all else.

**Okay, John, what do you think punk rock means today?**

I think keepers of the definition are the majority of people out there. It's really not for me to say I don't think. I think my ideas about punk rock are a bit more maverick than what the mainstream thinks.

**Well, what are your ideas about punk rock?**

Well, I think it's a music form that really has no rules, and that was what led me to gravitate towards punk rock music. I was into how it was just completely free-form and how a lot of different genres fit into punk rock as long as it's executed with a certain amount of honesty and passion and energy and resourcefulness. Punk rock is not about being a great guitar player or singer, it's about doing the best with what you have. I can really relate to that.

**What do you think the majority thinks?**

Well, I think now that you have punk rock as a widely recognized genre, I think it's become more of a certain style, like a certain drum beat or a tempo of music. More of a style.

**So, when you say that punk rock has no rules do you mean that musically or do you mean that with everything, like art, style, fashion, lyrical focus, or everything?**

I think it's everything. Disregarding rock and roll convention. I agree with that, that's fine with me. But as things progress or regress and change and evolve, punk rock can be similar to what rock and roll has become: very overblown. A lot of people have associated a certain style of political nature with punk rock music and these days I don't really think that's fair to do. A lot of people associate the do-it-yourself ethic with punk rock and I don't think that's fair these days either because bands like the Sex Pistols and the Ramones weren't necessarily bands that were preaching DIY in their music or their ethic. So, I'm not sure if DIY is as embedded in the history of punk as people think. Especially because many punk bands that were bonafied punk rock bands aren't as DIY as people often want them to be. It's kind of weird because you have blues which is defined by the blues scale; you have jazz which is defined by probably instrumentation and swing and arrangements; and rock and roll is very much about a tempo and a beat, and a certain sound. But, punk rock is all sort of intangible sounds. It's one of those things that is hard to simply label as a certain thing because it means something different to pretty much everybody. People are really serious about it too, they get really offended when you say "punk is dead" or "punk sucks now." It's something people hold so close to them, they need to lighten up.

**So, how do you think Rocket from the Crypt fits or does not fit into that ethos?**



We're very resourceful, we make do with what we have. I like to think that what little skill we have we use effectively. I don't know. I can't really define what Rocket from the Crypt is, not because it's so many different things but because I would never really want to be painted into a corner, especially when it's just a title for something—something that doesn't really hold any truth.

**And do you like it that way?**

Yeah, that's totally fine with me. Our agenda has always been completely musical, have a good time and share that good time with others. But, the music has always come first. We just love to write and play music. We love it. We want to stay within ourselves and keep on track.

**John, what do you consider a good show that you like to see and what do you consider a good show that you play?**

Playing a good show and going to a good show is pretty much the same thing. You want everyone to come away with a sense of communion. You want everyone to leave with the feeling that the event was fun and successful. You want everyone to feel that they were very much responsible for the success of that event. Some of my favorite shows are shows that I've left and felt that as an audience member my presence was an integral part of the show's success, and by success I mean having a good time. Playing a show is the same thing. I like to feel that I'm communicating with people on a level of bringing them together to have a good time. Also, playing kick-ass music and having people understand it and love it. When I'm up on stage it's the one time of the day when we're on tour that I feel that somebody can actually understand what I'm about. It's much easier to play a song and have people listen than just opening up your mouth and speaking. I think music transcends all boundaries of communication and I really hope our music does just that.

**Well, John, anyone that's seen any of your bands knows that you're possibly the greatest showman there is today in the punk world. I read in Punk Planet that you wouldn't mind to be labeled as a "party band" if people decide to label you as a party band.**

No, not at all.

**Do you see Rocket from the Crypt as sort of a ten year-plus party?**

Yeah for the most part, definitely. It's funny because for people one word can be associated with so much fun and for others that same thing can be a turn off. Labelling is always a hard thing, but a party is just so innocent. It's coming together with a group of your friends and having a good time. If we're going to be labeled as anything I want to be labeled as a party band because that is the purest form of a good time. Yes, I think we are a party band. For the last ten years we've been not only having a good time but we've been making friends all over the world. It's great to be able to connect to people all over the world and I think a traveling party is the best way to do that.

**But it's funny because when you think of a party band you generally think of some funk band that plays at college frat houses.**

I guess it's up to us to change that perception. I realize that that's something people might think right off the bat: oh this is a frat band with a bunch of guys sitting around a keg without their shirts on cheering each other to see who can drink Coors Lite faster. (laughter) I don't think of it that way, though. I have parties at my house and we play records and we dance and we barbecue and have a really great time. To me it doesn't really undermine our integrity. How can enjoying what you're doing undermine your integrity?

**Of course, but as you said before people in punk rock take it so seriously sometimes. People—myself included—often forget that you go to a show to have fun, not necessarily to be told something important.**

Yeah definitely, and I find myself telling people what to do a bit too much. I would really like it if people came to our shows and let down their guard enough to really cut loose and lose themselves in the moment. Sometimes I may be a bit too adamant about getting that idea across.

**So do you look down on bands or musicians who use all sorts of arcane recording techniques that they can't possibly recreate live, or bands that play the exact same in the studio as on stage?**

No, I don't look down on anyone. I think making records is a lot of fun. It can be great fun to mess around and experiment in the studio. There is a time for that if it's best for the song. I don't think that's a bad thing. There's some songs we don't play live because of that. I think first and foremost a band is defined by how they play live and I think that may be why we take the live aspect of our band so seriously. We practice hard and we try to play really good because we feel that that's how a band is defined, by how they play all together in the same room.

**But it's interesting because it seems like such a basic statement yet so many bands have sort of forgotten about that these days.**

Well, style has become more important than ever these days. There's a lot of bands with cool







band names and great T-shirts and some really cool ideas with how to present their music. But, musically there's really nothing that I relate to. People can say the same thing about us, I'm sure, but we spend a lot of time writing songs and trying to be creative. We try to do stuff we haven't done a million times before and try to push our sound into the future. It's a lot of fun, but I hope the presentation doesn't ever surpass what is going on musically. That's what's really important, the music, not the presentation. It's not even about playing your instruments, you don't have to be good on your instrument, it's more about coming up with good songs.

**John, I'm a big fan of all of your many bands, like Drive Like Jehu and The Hot Snakes, but you've tried so many different styles. Do you do that intentionally? Do you do a band in order to just try something new?**

Not really, the side projects just come out of me wanting to play with different people. Wanting to do something different, but not so much like, "this is going to be this kind of music." With the Hot Snakes I really just wanted to do something more direct and I wanted to focus on my guitar playing and how my guitar sounded. I had ideas for sounds that I heard in my head and wanted to emulate. I wanted to play with my friend Jason on drums 'cause he's really good. So, it just seemed like one of those things where it was a good time to do this so I did.

**You guys have some of the most loyal fans in the world, what with kids tattooing the Rocket logo on themselves. What do you think inspires such loyalty?**

I don't know. Maybe because none of my bands were ever hugely popular kids could feel that those bands belonged to them. We're not a band that you see plastered all over the place or all over the radio, so I think kids feel like we are theirs and theirs alone. I'm not sure. Maybe it comes from the fact that kids come to our shows and have a great time and they feel like they connect with us. They see something that reminds them of themselves or something they aspire to us when they see. When we look at Rocket from the Crypt it's something that is a mixture of all our favorite bands, it's something that we love so much and we're so proud of. Maybe other people feel the same way.

**Does it ever scare you how much they love you and that they put so much faith in you?**

No it never scares me. It's really exciting that people want to be involved and like the band so much that they feel that connection. I have a Rocket tattoo myself so I'm kind of one of them. We tend to put so much thought into every record we make so I'm not really worried about making any decisions that I'm later going to regret.

**On your style, do you think your style is influenced by Mexico at all? I see the cobras in your artwork, your outfits on stage, and stuff like that. Do you think there is sort of an exotic appeal to your style?**

Wow, I've never thought about it. I guess I always thought that Rocket had a very American style, with the belt-buckles, tattoos, and such. If pressed I would have to say that I think San Diego, being such a leisure town, has influenced our style the most. Sure we're near Mexico and we go there a lot, but I think with the beach and the sunny weather and a lot of the music that comes out of this place I always thought of us as being distinctly a San Diego band. Everyone in the band embraces what this city has to offer. I think it's pretty intangible, though. It definitely exists, we couldn't make this music anywhere else. But, yeah, I think it's distinctly American.

**What bands that are around these days do you think put on a really great show?**

Um, I saw James Brown about three years ago and he was really fantastic. Even after all these years he is still amazing. I think Fugazi will always be good. Every time I've seen them I've been very very impressed.

**Photos by Ross**

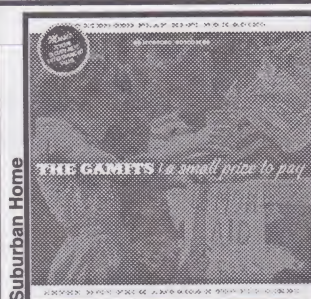




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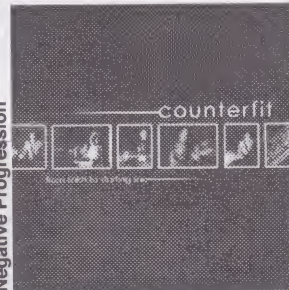
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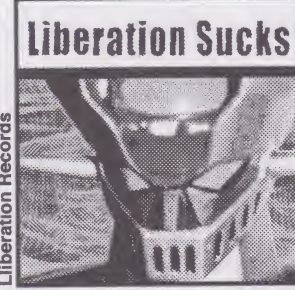
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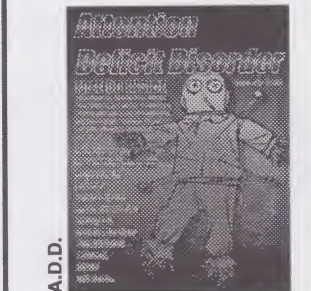
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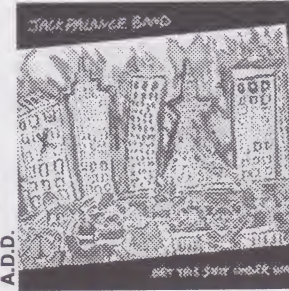
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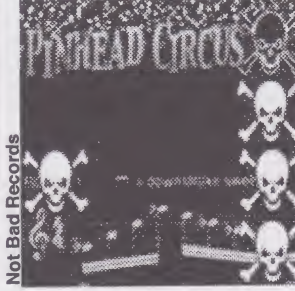
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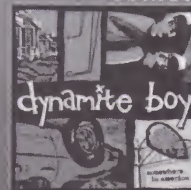
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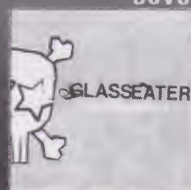
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# THE ROCKING HORSE WINNER

*(This interview was done by Ross with Jolie, the singer for the Rocking Horse Winner)*

**If someone forced you to compare your band to the following other bands or artists, which would it be and why? Joni Mitchell, Throwing Muses, or Juliana Hatfield.**

That's tough, because I don't really listen to any of the three. But, I guess I'd have to say Juliana Hatfield, mainly due to the style of her voice.

**When friends and relatives ask you what your band sounds like, what do you say?**

I usually just tell them they'll have to hear it and make the call, and they usually do.

**Do they understand what you're doing or trying to do with your music?**

All of our friends and family are very supportive. It's funny, because my family seems to view every member of a band as an automatic "rockstar". They're always excited to hear news of what we're doing, and how shows went. It's something completely foreign to them, and something they think they could never do.

**What goals would you like to achieve with the Rocking Horse Winner?**

Ideally, and I speak for the entire band, we would like to be able to live off of the music. We realize that takes a lot of hard work, and we're finally ready to do what needs to get done to get to that point.

**What is the opposite of your band? Why?**

I guess that would be one that provokes anger. Most of our songs are related to more settling emotions, despite a few sad lyrics here and there. Although, I'm not saying louder bands aren't trying to relay the same message.

**What do you think the perfect setting to listen to your music is?**

In a car, on a road trip.

**What do you think is the worst, but still plausible, setting to listen to your music is?**

At home going nowhere...

**Do you have to be in love to write a love song? Do you have to be sad to write a sad song?**

Definitely not. Henry (guitarist) wrote a majority of the lyrics, while Jeronimo (bassist) and I wrote a few. I've always loved writing in general, and what I put down on paper isn't always what I'm feeling at the time. The words can be about something you've experienced at one time or another, or a story you're creating.

**Which would you rather write?**

Personally I'd rather write a love song. It's a much better feeling.

**Which do you find yourself writing more often?**

Most of our songs appear to be love songs, but they can really be interpreted in any way.

**In 3 sentences or less, what are your thoughts on the ICBM shield proposed by the Clinton/Bush administrations?**

(I'll let Jeronimo answer this one)

It's a bad idea because it'll only promote war. That money could go toward more useful things. The cold war is over.

**Could you ever see your band making it to the big time and being on MTV?**

Anything's possible, but it's going to take hard work to get there.

**Why or why not?**

I think we have the potential to reach larger audiences, which is our goal. Something definitely has to change about the music that the masses are listening to these days!

**Is this a bad thing?**

Not at all, but getting on MTV is not something we're going to specifically strive for. If it happens, it happens....

The Rocking Horse Winner can be reached at [www.rockinghorsewinner.com](http://www.rockinghorsewinner.com)



## THE EXPLOSION

*(This interview was done by Ross and Ana Saldamando in a hail of spray-paint fumes with Sam and Dave in the Lower East Side of New York City. It is goofy, but it was done before September 11th)*

**How did you guys get your name?**

Well, Matt and I have been friends for a really long time and we knew Dave and on random nights and drunk at parties he would say, "one day we're going to do a band, one day!" And he already had the name before we even started playing together. So, when we actually started it was a no-brainer on what we would be called. I think he got it from the dark recesses of his mind.

**Are you afraid you'll ever be caught in an explosion or something like that-- in a big international terrorist scheme or something?**

Well, we were in an earthquake a while back in Seattle. Dave, the guitar player, and I were getting our haircuts at this barber shop and all of a sudden the whole place started shaking. Everybody starts running out the places and going nuts. At first I thought it was subway going by or something but then we went outside and cars were going up and down and the buildings were swaying back and forth.

**So were people like, "dude the Explosion played the day of an earthquake"?**

Well no, we played the night before and by the time of the next show no one even cared.

**So, international terrorism doesn't scare you?**

No, but that earthquake was a rush, it was kind of fun in a scary sort of way.

**But, man made disasters don't scare you?**

Nah, not really. What are the chances of that happening?

**Well can you tell us a story of when you guys were kids and you experimented with various kinds of explosives or explosions?**

Well, when I was a young boy I really liked playing with GI Joe toys until it wasn't cool when I turned like 12 or so. So, me and the neighborhood guys got all our GI Joe toys together and put them in a pile and sprayed them with hairspray and then lit them

all on fire. One time we covered the whole neighborhood with black toxic fumes. I'm from Clinton, MA and I'd say that's pretty typical for a young boy in Clinton.

**So, was this incident buried in your subconscious when you guys agreed upon the name the Explosion?**

No, but I always thought explosive things were pretty cool. We also blew up fireworks like M-80s and cherry bombs and stuff.

**Did you ever get arrested?**

No. But, I always thought it would be cool to incorporate pyrotechnics into our live set. That would be the Explosion a bit more explosive, don't you think?

**Definitely. Tell me a band you'd like to emulate as far as pyrotechnics go.**

Queen. They had sparklers shooting off on the side of the stage. It's a stupid idea, forget it, I'm striking it from my memory.

**I imagine most of the clubs you guys play at probably have banned pyrotechnics.**

Yeah, explosives in shows have gotten a bad rap since James Hetfield's [of Metallica] arm caught on fire. Or, since Michael Jackson's hair caught on fire. Although, I think that Matt had explosive diarrhea one time.

**Was the Unabomber right?**

Well no since he killed innocent people. But I did dress like him for Halloween a few years back.

**Photo by Ross**





# The Fucking Champs

(This interview was done by Jonah with Tim Green of the Fucking Champs)

**What's it like going from a very political band like Nation of Ulysses, to a band that isn't overtly political? Do you use any other mediums to express your political side?**

No, just my needlepoint.

**How did the latest Nation record-- a collection of four-track recordings-- come about?**

That's all stuff that we recorded after the last tour at our house. The version of "P-Power" was recorded in '90, I think while Steve G. was at N.I.H. undergoing medical experiments for money. The tapes had been lost for years. Ian MacKaye discovered the tapes in his house, and we put it out.

**Why did you change your name from the Champs to the Fucking Champs?**

It just fucking sounds better.

**I've read that you don't consider the Fucking Champs to be a "metal" band, what kind of band do you think it is?**

We play total music.

**What do you think has been the best decade for rock n' roll?**

The 70's had it all- best sounding records too.

**What do you think of mainstream music today?**

I'm just baffled by it. Every video I see seems like a parody. I keep expecting to see Weird Al's credit come up, but instead it's some 'nu-metal' name like 'NUTS' or something.

**You've had experience as both a producer and a musician, which is more rewarding? Have you ever been forced to record a band you didn't like? Can you express yourself through production?**

I enjoy playing music much more, but engineering and producing can certainly be a lot of fun. It's always better working with a band that I feel comfortable with so I can suggest sounds or parts without feeling like I'm trying to change the band somehow. There's absolutely a lot of room for expression in recording bands- from just getting

interesting sounds, to writing, and sometimes playing parts with the band.

**What's your position on the analog vs. digital debate?**

Well, digital is still in its infancy, but I just don't think it will ever come close to sounding as good as a well aligned/biased tape machine. Computers are convenient for some things, but everyone knows they suck.

**There are vocals on the song, "Extra Man," on your last album, IV. Have you considered adding vocals to more of your music?**

Yeah, it's nice to have at least one vocal song on an album, but we're not gonna go out of our way to write one.

**Why did you choose to include all the equipment, down to the type of tape you used to record the album, in the liner notes to IV? How important is equipment in the creation of your music?**

I like to have something to read while I'm listening to a record. Josh is pretty fanatical when it comes to guitars and amps, and I'm always curious about what kind of equipment was used to record the records I listen to, so it seemed obvious to us to detail the whole process.

**What would be the most dramatic scene if VH-1 did a Fucking Champs "Behind the Music?"**

There was this time that I saw this guy at a show in San Francisco who I hadn't seen in like 3 weeks.

**How does it feel to be interviewed in the same magazine as Slash?**

Um, a little tired right now.

**What are the Fucking Champs' future plans?**

Some west and east coast dates before we go to Europe for 6 weeks in October. We're doing 2 1/2 weeks with Trans Am in Iceland, Ireland, Scotland and England, which will coincide with the release of the first Transchamps EP. Then we have 17 days with Pleasure Forever in western and southern Europe. We'll work on the new album some more in December, and then a U.S. tour in the spring. This time we WILL play Florida and Canada, I promise!



## Resurreccion

Do you really think that? Thanks, I don't think it's so much better than others. One of the reasons it may be good is because we love good design and production. Just because something is "indie" or DIY doesn't mean it has to be done with poor quality, small print-run, bad writing, and that type of stuff. It can have color, look professional, have a big print-run, and still be DIY. We are DIY and some people, like you, say that we are professional. Look at labels like Touch and Go and Dischord: they are super DIY and all their stuff is some of the most professionally recorded and packaged records you will find anywhere.

**What is the difference between a magazine and a zine?**

For me, it is the overall quality of the product. It shouldn't be that way, but it is. I think a magazine is more professional in that sense, than a zine. For Resurreccion, we don't put "magazine" or "zine" on the cover anymore, and we use both words when we talk about it. If you see, in this interview, sometimes I say zine, and sometimes magazine, really, what matters is the content. If that's not good then it doesn't matter what you call it. And if it is, then it still doesn't matter.

**What bands are you listening to right now? What Spanish bands should we all check out?**

Now I'm listening the last FRODUS CD, Converge/Hellchild split CD, the new disc from Burning Airlines is amazing! Error type: 11 are great too! The new Cave-in, the new Suicide Note, High on Fire, and the list goes on. I also like This Year's Model, they are a great band. I love Long Island bands since Wreck-Age times! And from Spain the new Like Peter At Home stuff, which we put out, is great! They're like Entombed meets Eye Hate God meets Botch! Other Spanish bands like Shameful Heaven, Hopeful and Versvs. And there is a new stoner rock bands here called Viaje A 800 that is very good.

You can reach Juan and Encarni at: [resurreccionmag@wanadoo.es](mailto:resurreccionmag@wanadoo.es)

**What is Resurreccion, what does it aim to do, and what does it do to accomplish this?**

Resurreccion is a combination of a few things: a magazine, Outlast Records, a mailorder, and a design company. Our purpose is to cover bands that don't get into other zines or magazines. We try to cover music that we like—usually in the hardcore or punk style—but that aren't already in a million other zines. Our purpose is to have fun, listen to new music, and show something new to the people in Spain, bands not very well known here.

**Why do you choose to cover mostly the Spanish scene with international bands taking more of a background role, rather than cover the international scene as a whole?**

Well, in Spain there are a lot of great bands, that the rest of the world doesn't really know about. We want the world—and the rest of Spain—to know about music that we love that they might not know of. But, more importantly that covering the Spanish scene we try to cover quality music. We don't care if the music is from Spain or Asia, we just want to cover good music. Nonetheless, the Spanish scene is getting really good and we want to do something professional to get the word out.

**How does the Spanish scene differ from the rest of the hardcore scenes you've witnessed?**

For many years no one outside of Spain gave the Spanish scene any attention. Every other scene in Europe or the USA gets tons of attention, but not us. We used to get records later than everyone else, few international tours came here, and there were only a few bands of good quality in Spain. But now it's different. More people look at Spain, we have good bands, some of them on foreign labels (and some have toured Europe and the USA). We even have a lot of international tours come here. The Spanish scene is getting better and better every year!

**Resurreccion is easily one of the most professional, slick publications covering hardcore and punk out there. Why did you choose to go the slick route with your magazine rather than a more of an indie DIY feel?**



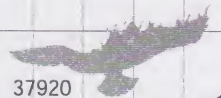
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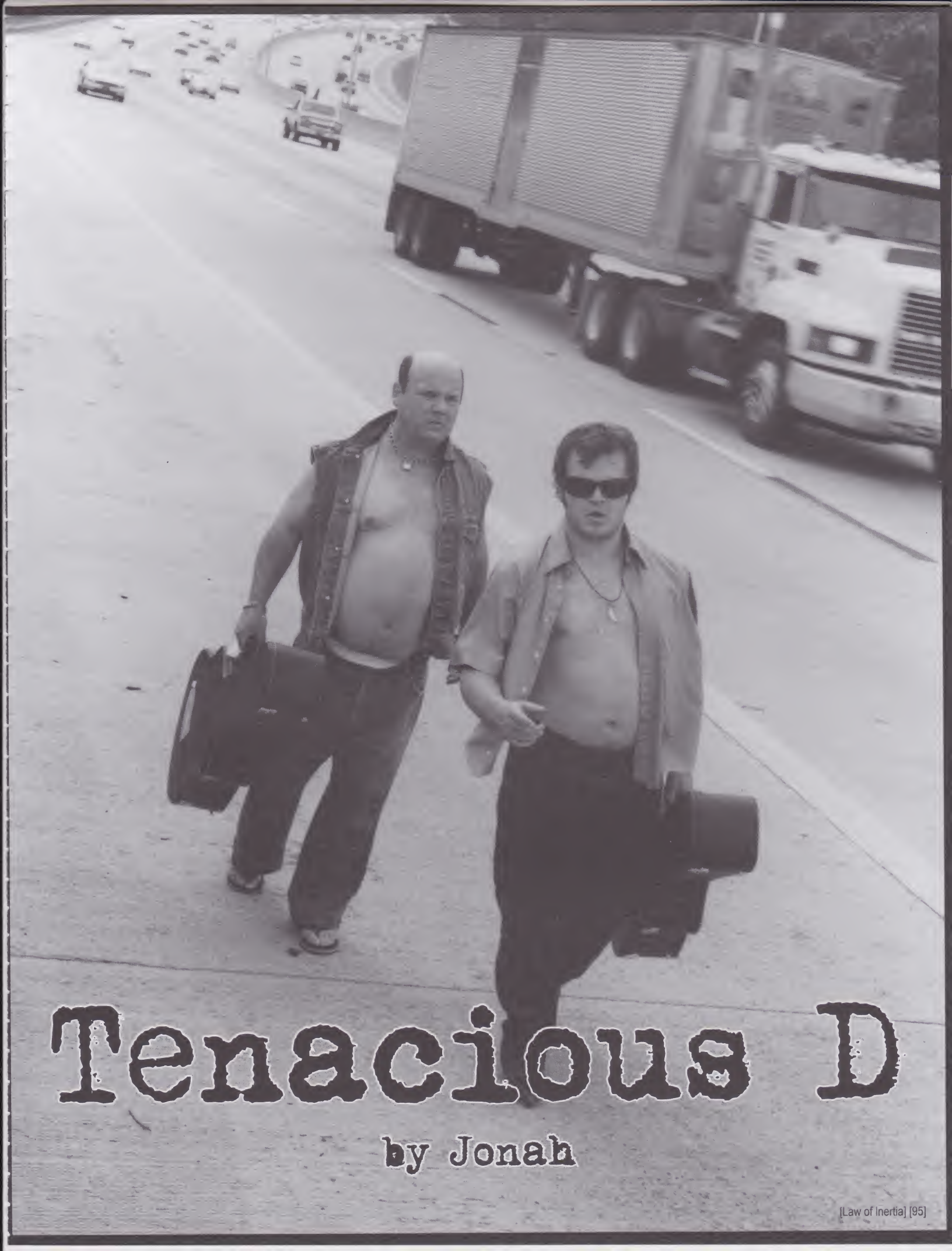
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# Tenacious D

by Jonah



In the now defunct TV series, Tenacious D -the hard rockin' duo of Jack Black (High Fidelity, The Cable Guy) and Kyle Gass- hilariously suffer through the trials and tribulations of being struggling musicians: How to write a song, coming to terms with the fact that the rock star dream is a lie, road gigs, and obsessive fans. Although the series was cancelled in 1999, the duo is about to resurface with their first record, and they're getting by with a little help from their friends. The Dust Brothers are assuming production duties, and with a supporting cast made up of Foo Fighter Dave Grohl behind the drum kit, as well as members of the Vandals and Phish on their respective instruments, their backing band is reason enough to buy the record. But when you get past the raucous humor of the group, Jack and Kyle manage to write some dazzling melodies, and their singing is nothing to laugh about. (Trust me, Jack's version of "Let's Get It On" in the movie "High Fidelity" was nothing, folks). In one episode, Jack says, "Don't confuse the art with the artist," but it's hard not to when these guys are just as candid, humorous, and witty during conversation as they are when they're reading from a script. I wasn't sure how this interview would turn out once it was transcribed into print format, but I was laughing out loud while I was editing it, no doubt freaking out my roommate. So sit back, relax, and get ready to catch a rare insight into the inner workings of the self-proclaimed, "Greatest band in the world."

**Kyle:** What is the name of your publication?

**It's called Law of Inertia. We're mostly a punk rock magazine...**

**Kyle:** What the hell are we doing in there? (laughter)

**Tenacious D is punk rock; you had someone from the Vandals play on your new record, didn't you?**

**Kyle:** Warren.

**Jack:** That's true.

**Kyle, I also saw you in the film "That Darn Punk."**

**Kyle:** You saw me in that? How is it? I haven't seen it.

**Jack:** Dude, I don't know if you know, but Dave Grohl comes from some punk rock roots. He was in a band, a very important band to punk rock, what were they called? (laughter)

**Kyle:** Check out this album title we came up with last night...

**Jack:** I don't know if we should bust that out right now; it might have to remain secret until the release of the album. I don't know if it's a good one.

**Why don't you run it by me and I'll give you my opinion.**

**Jack:** I can't remember, what is it?

**Kyle:** Tenacious D... "Original Texture" (laughter). I want to say this.....

**Jack:** No, no, no, no! You definitely don't say anything else! It requires no explanation.

**Kyle:** What do you think of when you hear it?

**Jack:** It's not a thing you think of, it evokes a, connotes a...what does it mean? (laughter)

**Kyle:** You would think of some product or something...

**Jack:** STOP IT! We're going to end this interview if Kyle continues on this track. Let's move onto the next thing.

**Can we get the history of Tenacious D out of the way for people who aren't familiar with you yet?**

**Kyle:** History, how did we meet? I don't remember. How did we get together? Why is the music funny? Listen I don't know, but thank god it happened because I was having trouble making ends meet.

**What were you doing before you were in the band?**

**Kyle:** I gambled, smoked crack...

**Jack:** Tenacious D wasn't so much created as it was invented.

**Kyle:** Is that different?

**Jack:** I was trying to be...

**Kyle:** profound?

**Jack:** Yeah. Me and KG were in a theatre company together called the Actors Gang... can you tell who is who? I don't want to be misquoted.

**Yes, I know this is Jack.**

**Kyle:** Do I sound more feminine?

**No.**





**Jack:** WHAT? I sound more feminine?

**No, neither one of you sound feminine.**

**Kyle:** Interesting, because Jack talks unnaturally low.

**Jack:** You think we're both extremely feminine?

**I said neither of you is feminine.**

**Jack:** I'm watchin' you, Jonah.

**You guys have been together since '94, why did you wait so long to release a record?**

**Kyle:** A very good question. A penetrating question. A question that penetrates me.

**Jack:** The cult audience had reached critical mass; I was measuring it. You could feel it in the air; it was like they need this now.

**Kyle:** Have you heard of the internet?

**I think so.**

**Kyle:** It's a computer thing, it's really complex. But apparently there's a way to put music over it and people were listening to unauthorized live shows. It's a bummer, I have a lot of qualms. It's like wait a minute....you can't hear that, I sound as bad as I am.

**Jack:** (laughter) We gotta go make an album and make it sound better.

**Kyle:** And then people said, "What are you guys going to do? Just go in there and do it like..." NO! You already have that!

**Jack:** We had to bump it up, people.

**Kyle:** So we got the most expensive producers we could get, the Dust Brothers. Who by the way said they were working cheap. I want that quoted.

**Jack:** Now that Kyle's done slamming them, the Dust Brothers are in the business, no let me change that, they're in the masterpiece business (laughter). Take a look at their rezi, that means resume. Masterpiece after masterpiece, and this is the latest masterpiece to pop out of their fannies.

**So how did you two hook up with Dave Grohl?**

**Kyle:** Who, Dr. G? We did a show at the Viper room and during soundcheck Dave Grohl's head popped through the curtain, which kind of freaked me out...

**Jack:** There's a curtain around the stage and it wasn't really a soundcheck, it was

right before the show started. We were tuning up and he sort of peeked his head back stage and was like "Hey." We were kind of stunned and didn't say anything.

**Kyle:** Mainly because he played with Nirvana.

**Jack:** And then he was like "Alright" and he left (laughter). Then we fuckin' torched the place, it actually exploded with pleasure. That's how I remember it; if I watched the playback it might be different...

**Kyle:** Of course after the show, we sort of pretended not to search for him, like we might accidentally bump into him...

**Jack:** And we caught him on the stairs trying to make a hasty retreat. No, he was into it and he said some really nice things to say.

**Kyle:** So then we got the call to be in the "Learning to Fly" video.

**Jack:** We knew he was down with the D and when it came down to make the album and we were making our list of people to fuckin' play with us, it was like well who likes us the most? I think it's Dr. G.

**If Dave offered to join the D full-time would you consider being a power trio?**

**Kyle:** You know, he actually complained a lot about the time. He said, "Listen, this band is not my main focus!"

**Jack:** He doesn't like to play full-time drums anymore. He injures himself while he plays; he gets so into it that he gets a big bruise on his leg. Plus, if we had him on there we'd have to get a bass player, and then you've got to get the lute player, and you can't be without the Jew's harp...

**Kyle:** When we go on tour we're going to have the drums set up at every gig and if Dave wants to play they will be there, ready.

**Jack:** And NO ONE else can play the drums.

**Kyle:** It's tough, because we've got to travel with the drums and a drum-tech. We could get a cutout of him....

**So what's the inner band relationship like between you two? Is everything 100% collaborative?**

**Kyle:** It used to be very, very friendly; it was friends first. Then it degenerated, and now it's just business. I pretend to like Jack, I think he's pretending a







little bit too.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Kyle:** And it seems to work. Creatively, what is it like?

**Jack:** I don't know, I'm tired (laughter). And hungry. Next question.

**This is a serious question, even though you guys are funny, a lot of work goes into your songs and the band itself isn't a joke. Do you feel like you're ever unfairly perceived as merely a "joke band"?**

**Jack:** No. Our music is so powerful it penetrates all comedy.

**Kyle:** It transcends, really. I don't really feel like it's funny when we're playing it.

**Jack:** Are we a joke to you?

**No, that's why I was asking the question.**

**Kyle:** We were referred to in a few articles as a "joke band."

**I've seen the term "mock-rock" as well.**

**Kyle:** And then when they spell rock, it's r-a-w-k. That's when I fuckin' lose it. That's funny if you spell it that way.

**Why did you decide to use acoustic instruments as opposed to plugging into a half stack and rockin' out?**

**Kyle:** I have a theory on this: it actually exposes the actual rocking more by not disguising it.

**Jack:** That's right. It's like look at the guy, look how much he accomplishes...and he's in a wheel chair!

**Kyle:** Do you see *My Left Foot*?

**Jack:** That dude just did a marathon...in a wheelchair! It makes it a bigger deal (laughter). When I was first taking guitar lessons from Kyle—he taught me—it was on the acoustic because that's how you learn. I guess you could learn with an electric but it's so high maintenance. You need a fuckin' amp, you need...

**Kyle:** The pooper pedal.

**Jack:** The acoustic you can play anytime, anywhere, and be like a Traveling Wilbury.

**So are you putting your acting careers on hold while you pursue the D full-time?**

**Kyle:** Well mine's kind of always on hold.

**Jack:** My fucking acting is taking a back-sickity-sackity-seat.

**Kyle:** But he's still Hollywood Jack.

**Jack:** Don't make any mistake about that!

**Kyle:** There could be a power deal happening with the next cell phone call.

**Is it true that you guys wrote a movie?**

**Jack:** Uh, we tried to.

**Kyle:** And failed. Then we paid someone else to write it and they failed as well.

**Jack:** It won't be long now buddy, leave that to Hollywood Jack. I'm thinking Cohen brothers to write/direct.

**Kyle:** I'm thinking a Stanley Kubrick corpse.

**Jack:** Like *Weekend at Kubrick's*? (laughter)

**That's awful. (laughter) So why are there only three episodes of the show on HBO?**

**Kyle:** Power struggle. HBO begged us to do more shows...

**Jack:** Yeah, let's do more shows except for one difference: you don't have any say in what you do anymore. You just show up and do what we tell you.

**Kyle:** Did you see the show, the Monkees?

**Jack:** Why would we do that when we were kickin' so much ass? And we said, "Yeah, how much?" and they told and we said...PASS! It didn't really matter how much...

**Kyle:** You know the show they replaced us with?

**The Sopranos?**

**Kyle:** How'd you know that?

**I read it in the press release.**

**Jack:** You gotta be careful with repeaters.

**Kyle:** I've got to freshen up the act (laughter). Hold on.

(Kyle leaves)

**So Jack, can we talk about the side project now?**

**Jack:** Side project goes a little something like this: fuckin' me, Grohl...

**Kyle:** Hello?

**Jack:** Whoops. It's me Grohl, Slash and Flea! That's the fuckin' Jack Black experience!

**I actually interviewed Slash for this issue and he didn't mention anything about the Jack Black Experience.**

**Jack:** Oh shit, is he fuckin' drunk all the time?

**Kyle:** Did you ask if he had any hard feelings about Axl?



**Nah, I didn't want to ask any G N'R questions.**

**Kyle:** Yeah that's tough.

**Jack:** So what questions are you too nervous to ask us about? Listen, I know that it's tough, talking to your idols (laughter). Go ahead, don't pull any punches buddy.

**Okay, in the song "Kyle Took a Bullet for me" from the HBO series, who is the mystery character you sing about, Poops Magee?**

**Jack:** Ok, let me tell you something buddy, you don't ask questions about Poops Magee. You crossed the fuckin' line!

**Kyle:** If the identity of Poops was to get out, there would be a simultaneous imploding of all old matter from out of the universe. It'll die with us; it's like our bigfoot.

**Is that an example of a song that was written before the show and that part didn't work itself into the plot?**

**Jack:** No.

**Kyle:** Why are you continuing down this road?

**Jack:** I'm feeling like the interview is over if this is going to continue.

**Point taken. Are you going to have a single on the new record?**

**Kyle:** That's very interesting, that's a whole political thing we have with the suits. I think we have to have a single. Even though we said we don't want to be on the radio because we like Fugazi and we're trying to follow in their footsteps.

**Are you really Fugazi fans?**

**Kyle:** That's why we signed with a major label.

**Jack:** Yeah, that's why we charge 20 bucks for a show. We know we could charge 25, but that's not what it's about, it's about the music!

**Kyle:** We say, "What would Fugazi do?" and then we just do a little more than they would. (laughter)

**Jack:** I love Fugazi, I saw their documentary, "Instrument." Fuckin' ten years of integrity, sanctity and hard rockin'.

**Kyle:** We thought we were signing to an indie but we were fooled; it's not our fault.

**I think it would be cool if you did something with Dischord, Ian MacKaye's record label.**

**Jack:** He doesn't want us there...

**Kyle:** Especially not now. We've soiled our corporate shorts.

**What's the goal of the D? You already have a huge following and you haven't even released a record.**

**Kyle:** I know.

**Jack:** I hope big enough to play Japan because I'd like to go there.

**Kyle:** They've gotta have some great sushi there.

**Is there going to be a world tour after the record is released?**

**Jack:** We're doing a fuckin' tour of the states, not all fifty of them, major epicenters.

**Are you bringing anyone with you?**

**Jack:** We're not going down to Florida dude. It's too long. We've got to fly way out the way.

**Kyle:** After that election scandal as well, I'm not going down there.

**Jack:** Yeah, we'll play Florida, WHEN HELL FREEZES OVER!

**Are you still writing songs while you're on the road?**

**Jack:** The writing...

**Kyle:** It's like breathing.

**Jack:** The lyrics flow like wine, and the melodies flow like...wine.

**Kyle:** We're actually working on a song for your magazine, but the 'inertia' was so hard to rhyme that we actually abandoned it.

**Well thanks for the effort at least.**

**Kyle:** End up in Persia, matter of inertia...

**So what's next for Tenacious D?**

**Kyle:** Well now it's time to seize the hype machine.

**Jack:** There was talk of going to Europe for some type of European junket. I think that sounds crazy though.

**Kyle:** Why?

**Jack:** They don't know or care about the D...

**Kyle:** Well how do they find out about us?

**Jack:** Not at a junket. CANCEL! (laughter)

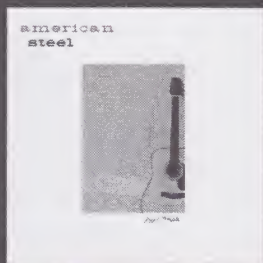
**Kyle:** And there, you have the insight into how it works.

**Photos by Sean Murphy and Ray Mickshaw**





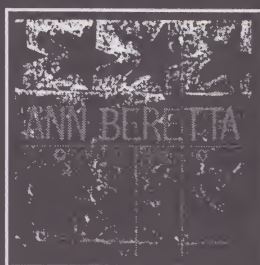
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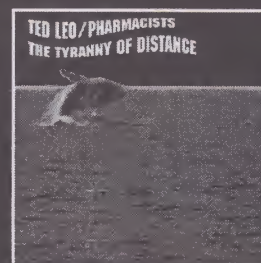
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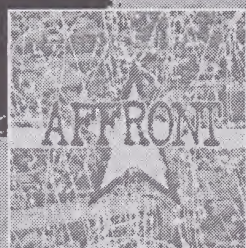
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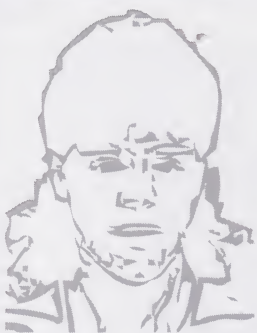


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# Street Chic

BY HEIDI DIEHL

Recently I went back to Syracuse to represent the 315 for a little while. It's always weird to go home, but this time took the cake. My old friend Seth has a mullet. It's deliberate—he cut away at the front of his hair without looking back. And the mullet is unmistakable. Seth looks like Kenny Loggins in the Footloose days. He's been offered crank in the park. Granted, Seth is crazy—he once fasted for three days and then went to the Chinese Buffet. But when I asked him why the mullet, he said simply, "it's hot".

I think there's more behind Seth's new hairstyle. The rise of the mullet in trendy circles has intrigued me since last fall, when I went to New Jersey with my friend Alicia in a borrowed car. We were headed to a high-profile Food Not Bombs event in Hoboken, and working that esteemed activist tradition of trust and decency, the owner of the car left us her keys without actually meeting us. To this day I don't know who she is, and before I go any further, I want to both thank her and apologize for the upcoming dis I'm about to deliver to her car and her (ironic) love of mullets.

Now, as I said, I didn't know anything about the owner of this car besides her name. But I did learn, thanks to her bulletin board style bumper, that she believes, among other things, that "mullet rock" (in sparkly letters). Well, I'm no snob about cars—I was getting a free ride—but I was embarrassed. I felt like a jerk. To everyone else on the road, we were just two hipsters in a nice car declaring something cool specifically because we could make fun of it. Other drivers were craning their necks to see if we even had mullets ourselves, as the ultimate testimony to our detachment from those less cool. That's the way I understood the logic of "mullet rock" anyway. So I wondered in the car that day, who's making these bumper stickers? Who made mullets cool? More importantly, who made irony so cool?

Almost a year later, mullets are still popular, strangely enough, directly because they are so awful. This frustrates me, and I've been complaining to my roommate Frank about it. He's from Vermont and connects everything that becomes cool to rednecks—hicks are cultural barometers, their backwoods lifestyles mercilessly coopted by the hip, who are in turn copied by malls across America. This explains the recent chicness of the mullet; it also explains rappers wearing Timber-

land boots. But is the mullet truly chic—is it truly popular? Or is it just the mockability of the mullet that we like? It's kind of like middle school: we're all insecure. Making fun of other people is a comfortable way to feel better about ourselves. And there's definitely some classism pushing the urban mullet to glory. After all, this is America. We believe in individual mobility and dodgeball in gym class. So it's not surprising that what we do actually share is just a big joke about white trash. The mullet, when worn sarcastically, becomes a way to prove success, to demonstrate what we aren't.

The mullet has garnered lots of attention, which is interesting in itself. It hasn't taken too long for this hairstyle to go from pool-hall to high fashion to national laughingstock. Hell, the mullet-as-clever-fashion-choice made the cover of the local Pennysaver not too long ago. So maybe mullets, as fashion item and collective joke, are reaching the end of their cultural moment. That's fine with me. I have nothing against the mullet as is, don't get me wrong. The mullet is only one example, albeit a glaring one, of our cultural overreliance on irony.

I want to note that I do not claim to be exempt from ironic detachment. I wear my "Harley-Davidson: A Way of Life" shirt pretty often. It seems an okay response to me, this being ironic, to the huge overriding irony we steep in on a daily basis. Especially now, because I'm living in New York City, where all irony and dishonesty in general seem extra-pronounced. (Here's a prime example: each day as I leave my home, I am heckled by groups of old men shooting dice on the sidewalk, who say things to me too raunchy to be printed in a family magazine. However, can I get a date less than twenty years older than me? The answer is no.) And so irony feeds irony, it gets kind of frustrating, we get cynical, we cut our hair into mullets. Is the progression that simple? When did style become so retrograde and sarcastic? Again, I'm not posing these questions as criticism as much as genuine curiosity: I'm as guilty as anyone and I wouldn't say I'm particularly ashamed of my sweatbands.

But I still want to understand ironic style. I just read a book where this guy uses parabolas and mathematical formulas with exponents to explain why certain things, such as those Hush Puppie old man-style shoes, become popular. This seems a little excessive. At this point, it

seems fashion stems more from kitsch value than from anything else. Are we progressing? Are we being honest? And what are we using this irony to hide from? Maybe it has something to do with the world almost ending not too long ago. We were all set up for an apocalypse that never came. And so maybe now there's nowhere to go but back; we're stuck in a climate of fear. My other roommate has lots of canned food in his basement. He says it's all going to end, and this is how he knows: when you die, your life flashes before your eyes. Culturally, all accumulated style is flooding us in a final burst of nostalgic nastiness.

This theory also seems kind of excessive. Besides, the mullet is not old school. Plenty of people are rocking them in all earnestness even as we speak. They are a respected part of many scenes.

But for a lot of people, the mullet does serve as a kind of trendy inside joke, usage of a foreign lifestyle to validate your own. The mullet offers a chance to be hip without being affirmative, without taking a risk. Hold on now, you're thinking, isn't developing a mullet kind of a big fashion risk in the first place? It's not like it's going to make you look that good. But there's nothing fresh about the mullet if you're only using it to make fun of someone else. I'd say it's a cop-out. It's more acceptable, much of the time, to be passionately negative than even mildly positive. Irony allows us to avoid stating opinions; it prevents rejection. I love enthusiasm. But we're wasting it if it's only focused on what we don't like.

So here's my biggest bone of contention with the urban mullet and with irony in general: being cynical and sarcastic translates into just being mean. Yesterday was the fourth of July, a proud day for our country: never has the influence of the mullet been more evident to me. I went to a party; I fully believe now that urban mullets and the ironic detachment they allow have seriously stunted social interaction.

We watched fireworks from the roof, but it wasn't this classic American scene of freedom and destruction that evoked the mullet in my mind. Rain forced too many people off the roof and into a small windowless apartment. Cynicism was bouncing off the walls; all insecurity was compressed. All talk of what was hip centered around what we didn't like. There was a lot of mocking, a lot of "no, I won't call you, you call me." There just wasn't

enough room for all of us and our egos, or rather, for our lack of egos. We were all too afraid to take up real space.

Come on now. Everyone there was at least moderately interesting. We could have been completely honest about ourselves and what we like. Do we need to use our awareness of what's not cool to prove how actually cool we are? That's busted.

So I left the party frustrated. This morning as I was mulling it over, I started reading a copy of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity magazine that somehow wound up in my living room. And according to this magazine, millennials, the people young right now, are going to be different than their slothful, cynical Generation X counterparts. Young folk like me are destined to become more conservative and more practical. Despite the increased presence of methamphetamines in the frat-house, we're all going to buckle down, work in offices and drive SUVs. I don't usually listen to aging frat boys—this article reeked with shameless optimism and possible recruiting tactics—but I do wonder if we're going to be innovative anymore. I think we're bogged down by our irony. I don't think most of us want to be more conservative—but it seems that's what's happening, oddly, with this influx of the mullet. Simply recycling old ideas gets kind of boring. We're turning into the frat boy of the future—who we might even make fun of—because we're too scared of not being cool.

Now some might say that the embrace of the mullet by the glittering portion of society is simply a hallmark of post-modernity, that hockey hair is just part of the pastiche. And sure, it's exciting and fun to see some guy skateboarding down the street sporting a mullet, Prada shoes, and prison-style safety glasses. But at the same time, let's hear it for being genuine. Let's go out on a limb.

I've always wanted to be a motivational speaker. But Wesley Willis could do a better job: "Cut the mullet". And if you can't do that, at least make sure it's pertinent to your lifestyle. Get the hair out of your eyes. Believe in yourself. Be nice. Thank you.







# Mike Park



Amazingly enough, not everyone knows the name Mike Park. But everyone should. While playing in the seminal Bay Area ska/punk band, Skankin Pickle, he started the sadly deceased Dill Records, and eventually spearheaded the ska craze a few years ago with his Asian Man Records. Although most of the music that Mike releases on Asian Man is ska, he clearly didn't do it to please anyone or make a dollar off the next big thing. Rather, it is easily apparent that Mike believes in ska as a fun, multicultural artform that he has loved for many years now. Similarly, anyone that has come into contact with Mike or any of his work knows that he strives to shed the indie rock community of its division of ethnicity, pretentiousness, and musical preference. He just wants people to get along and have fun enjoying music. But instead of just saying the same thing over and over again, Mike put his money where his mouth is and started the Plea For Peace tour-- which travels the nation each summer promoting equality and community, set to the soundtrack of some of the best bands the indie scene has to offer-- as well as organizing various anti-racist action compilations. Asian Man Records is also a model of how a business should be run. In my 3 and a half years of dealing with them, they are consistently one of the nicest and most helpful labels around. I remember Matt Skiba of the Alkaline Trio, who released 3 CDs and a handful of EPs on Asian Man, telling me that when you work with Mike, you are working with a friend first and foremost. There are no contracts or negotiations, just a handshake and a hug. In the past few years, Mike has been playing in a band called the Chinkees that play some of the most sincere, thought-provoking music I've ever heard. Not only do they play catchy, endearing ska-punk, but they manage to espouse a subtle set of politics that is so personal it is downright amazing. I've wanted to sit down and talk with the man so many people have told me is such a great guy (including LOI's former co-editor, Dan Frantic, who will tell anyone with ears how genuine Mike is) for a long time. So, a while back... I did. [Interview by Ross; Photos courtesy of Asian Man Records]

So, I'm going to Korea on Friday to play at a big festival in the city of Pusan. There's a big festival that the mayor is putting on to build themselves up as a place for tourists to come. We're playing with Megadeth there.

**Wow, that's pretty cool.**

Yeah, it's 20 bands. It's called the Pusan International Rock Festival. I haven't heard of any of the other bands, other than Slipknot who's also playing.

**When you first started playing music, did you ever think you'd be playing on the**

**same stage as Megadeth?**

No.

**Did you ever want to?**

No, but it's cool. (laughter) Years ago during Skankin' Pickle days we would have gone if we were invited. I'm sure we won't even see Dave Mustaine, but maybe we will.

**Do people know your work out there? When you walk down the street in certain Asian countries do they say, "Hey, look, it's Mike Park"?**

In Japan it happens all the time. Well, punk and ska are huge there, but in Korea no one knows the music so no one knows me.

**Do people ever come up to you and say, "hey, I really like the fact that you're an Asian musician instead of just another white guy" in Asian nations?**

No, because the communication gap is such that I've never had that deep of a conversation with anyone over there. Mostly just smiles, giggling, and "can I take your picture?" I haven't had any conversations that are deep with anybody in Japan. I show them that I appreciate their excitement but nothing more unfortunately. We did Plea for Peace there, and there's very little politics in Japan, especially in music. It's really obsolete in the music industry there. I had one girl who barely could speak any English who gave me a note where she wrote down her thoughts. The note said "it's about time someone did something like this" or something like that. We were raising money for earthquake relief in Kobe. In America the government helps out victims of disasters like that and in Japan the government doesn't help out at all.

**It's interesting that you brought the Plea for Peace tour there because I've heard that Japan is a pretty xenophobic society.**

I've heard that. I wish you could go there and see the country. It's really neat. The underground scene—they know everything about bands in the US and what's going on. The singer for Potshot is so into doing Plea for Peace. They did this big giant tour and took no money because they believed in the cause so much. That's amazing for a band from any country. A lot of bands talk about doing this and that, but if you ask them to do something for no money or even very little money you don't get anything from them.

**It's hard, though, because a lot of bands travel the nation half the year and don't make any money.**

Yeah, but I feel that a lot of the bigger bands could do it. But, there are so many hoops to go through to get a band to even get interested. And then when you tell their management that there's no money involved they shut the door on you.

**But, most of the original bands involved were friends of yours and worked with**



you.

Yeah, in 1999 I tried to make it bigger and get bigger bands to do it, like the Bad Brains, and Swingin Utters, and Tilt, and two months away from the time it was supposed to start we didn't even have a line-up because so few bands were willing to do it. This year a bunch of really cool bands, like Cave-in and Hot Water Music are doing it and I'm excited.

**That's awesome. Lucky us. So Mike, you know I don't exactly love ska, but every time I get a Chinkees CD I gobble it up. I think the Chinkees are making a really important statement that I don't think most people have ever thought about. I think it's best summed up on that EP you did, where someone was speaking before the CD started and he said that he felt there was really a latent racist attitude towards Asians in America because 3 major American wars in the past century were fought against Asians. He thought that there was a fear in America because of those wars that people ignore and never confront.**

It's a sample from a documentary on PBS. I think that Asians are the easy race to pick on. You hear it in comedy acts with funny accents and stuff. But, you never hear any complaints of racism towards Asians in the press or anything. Even the Bloodhound Gang had a song called "Chinkee Chinkee Bang Bang" that got no press except within the Asian community. It's frustrating because I see tons of magazines that totally endorse that band and didn't make any comments about that song.

**Well, it's interesting, because I'm Jewish, and the Jewish community pours tons of money into organizations like the Anti Defamation League which generates tons of press against any anti-Semitic comment that Marlon Brando or whoever says in passing. If you say anything about Jews in America today you get jumped on by everyone! But, if you're another minority then nothing happens.**



I know what you mean. For Asian youth, the minority of kids that listen to punk rock it's almost zero. At any punk show there's a handful of Asians, but in most places in America there's absolutely none. There's no punk bands with Asian members or any that try to target Asians. But, underground hip-hop has tons of Asians who are starting to target these issues. I don't necessarily agree with some of their standpoints, but I'm glad there are some subcultures that Asians are jumping into.

**In your work, you've tried to bring your ethnicity to the forefront. By putting out bands like the Chinkees, Potshot, Kemuri, and even by calling it Asian Man, you're making a political statement. On the one hand I think it goes unnoticed by some people and others think it's really fucking awesome. Is that intentional?**

I'm pro-Asian in everything I do. As far as giving kids who listen to punk or ska something to look up to, well yeah, of course. It's really amazing when I get letters from Asian American kids who say "thank you so much for doing this record label." I definitely try to make it publicly known that the owner of this label is Asian.

**Why do you do that?**

To be a role-model for kids who don't have anything else in punk rock to look up to. When I grew up in the Bay Area, I grew up in a white community where there were no Asians. It hit me later in life that that was the case. When I was younger I went through bouts of "why am I Asian?" I think a lot of Asians do that because those are kids who grew up knowing no other Asians in their community. You suddenly realize one day that you're different and you get confused.

**It's like the Bad Brains. They were probably the only all African American band in the history of punk, if I'm not mistaken. They really weren't looked at as this band that was a bunch of Rastafarians, but rather as a band that re-wrote the rules of hardcore. Do you see them in comparison to you?**

Well, the Bad Brains were very involved in Rock Against Racism in DC and they experienced incredible racism in the music industry. They never got much press, most of the press they got was word of mouth. They never got on MTV or in Rolling Stone. They deserved to be a

huge band, but never did. I see that and I don't want to let it happen again. Bands like Fishbone never made it big and they were so damn good. I guess a lot of my work is devoted to getting bands like that out there and giving them a voice and a platform with which to play on. I think that's the music industry there.

**Do you look to them for how you want to present yourself?**

Well, I'm not sure. I always thought it would be cool to have an all-Asian band when I saw Fishbone. I guess they influenced me more musically than politically. I had an all Asian cover band in high school, but until the Chinkees that was about as close as I got.

**Have you experienced racism in your musical career?**

Totally, just this last year we played Belgium and me and Miya were sitting outside of a café and some guy walked by and started making fun of us for being Asian. I think I've gotten about five or six letters—which I've saved all of them—where kids will tell me that it's a joke that I try to promote racial equality because racism doesn't exist today.

**No way, I wonder where those kids live.**

In the Pickle days there were very very few Asians involved in ska. There were always boneheads at shows back then. One time in Florida some kids were standing in the middle of a crowd sieg-heiling us. That was a weird show because it was packed. They had been telling us that they had been having a lot of skinheads at shows. I actually had to jump down and save a guy they tried to beat-up. One time we played in Baton Rouge at some bar. There were only a few people there and four of them were skinheads. Even though there was no one there, these skinheads were dancing and having a great time. Then, we sang a song called "Racist World," and as soon as we started playing it these skinheads stopped and started sieg-heiling as well. We were shocked 'cause they had been having a great time until then.

**Many may find this shocking, but I'm surprised to learn that you've experienced so much racism in your work. Maybe it's because I'm from San Francisco where there are tons of Asians, but I tend to think that the guy in that PBS documentary was right when he said that racism against Asians is bit more subtle than racism against, say, blacks or Latinos. It seems to me that on the Plea for Peace tour you're not trying to say, "hey, wouldn't it be cool if congress passed an anti-lynching bill [which they never have]," or, that "those two guys in Texas who dragged an African American guy from the back of their truck until his limbs fell off are the scum of the earth," but rather you're imploring people to look within themselves and recognize the various prejudices we all have.**

I don't want to get out of my league, but I don't know a lot about politics. Some kids have said things that make me think that they think I know everything. I don't try to pretend that I know everything about what's going on in the world. So, the basic message that I try to show is that we're all the same—that we have to treat each other with respect. Or else, we as a society are going to fail. It's just going to go downhill, and that's the basic message I try to share. I think nowadays I'm trying to set a tone of intelligence in music. I think we're hitting a depressed state. It's either depressed or just angry Limp Bizkit music. I want it to change, I want kids to have something to look forward to and look up, and have fun. I don't want kids to be divided, I want there to be a sense of community where kids can go and everybody respects each other for whatever reason. What I'd like to see is if four different style bands play together then everyone will still get along. But, it doesn't happen. If you have four bands of equal popularity of four different styles, then each band's fan would watch the band they came to see and then sit down for the other bands. I just wish that everyone could have fun and just love music. I think last year's tour was cool because we had a lot of different styles of music represented. I would walk around and hear kids go, "aw, I hate ska!" I hate hearing people talk like that about music, I hate hearing anyone say they don't like someone else's mode of expression. I also hate when people use words like "pussy" or "faggot" to label someone.

**Yeah, but do you think that's because we're from California?**

Well, you hear it all over the place.

**But, I'm not that surprised when I hear it other places, but in San Francisco it shocks me when I hear people use the word "faggot."**

Probably. Sometimes I just think what I'm trying to do is hopeless. I don't know what my ultimate goal is because I know you can't save the world by yourself, but I'd like to do something that makes a small difference. I'm doing it at such a small level.

**But the grass-roots level is where the important stuff is.**

You're right, but sometimes I look back and think that maybe I should have signed that big major label deal when I had the chance.

**Does it seem like a thankless task?**

Definitely. It makes me want to give up and at the same time try harder. It's hard because I think human nature means that nobody's perfect. In the non-profit world you always get let down—even by your friends—and you feel like you've let people down. It's just a big cycle. You learn what's important by trying new things. I definitely don't take anybody as an enemy, I hate the idea of holding grudges.

**But at the same time it's hard not to.**

True, but I try to forgive, if not forget. I like to think that everyone has something to offer. Sometimes you just need to dig down past the surface. And, I think the important part is remembering that you can't judge a book by its cover.

**Mike Park can be reached at [www.asianmanrecords.com](http://www.asianmanrecords.com)**

**Interview by Ross**



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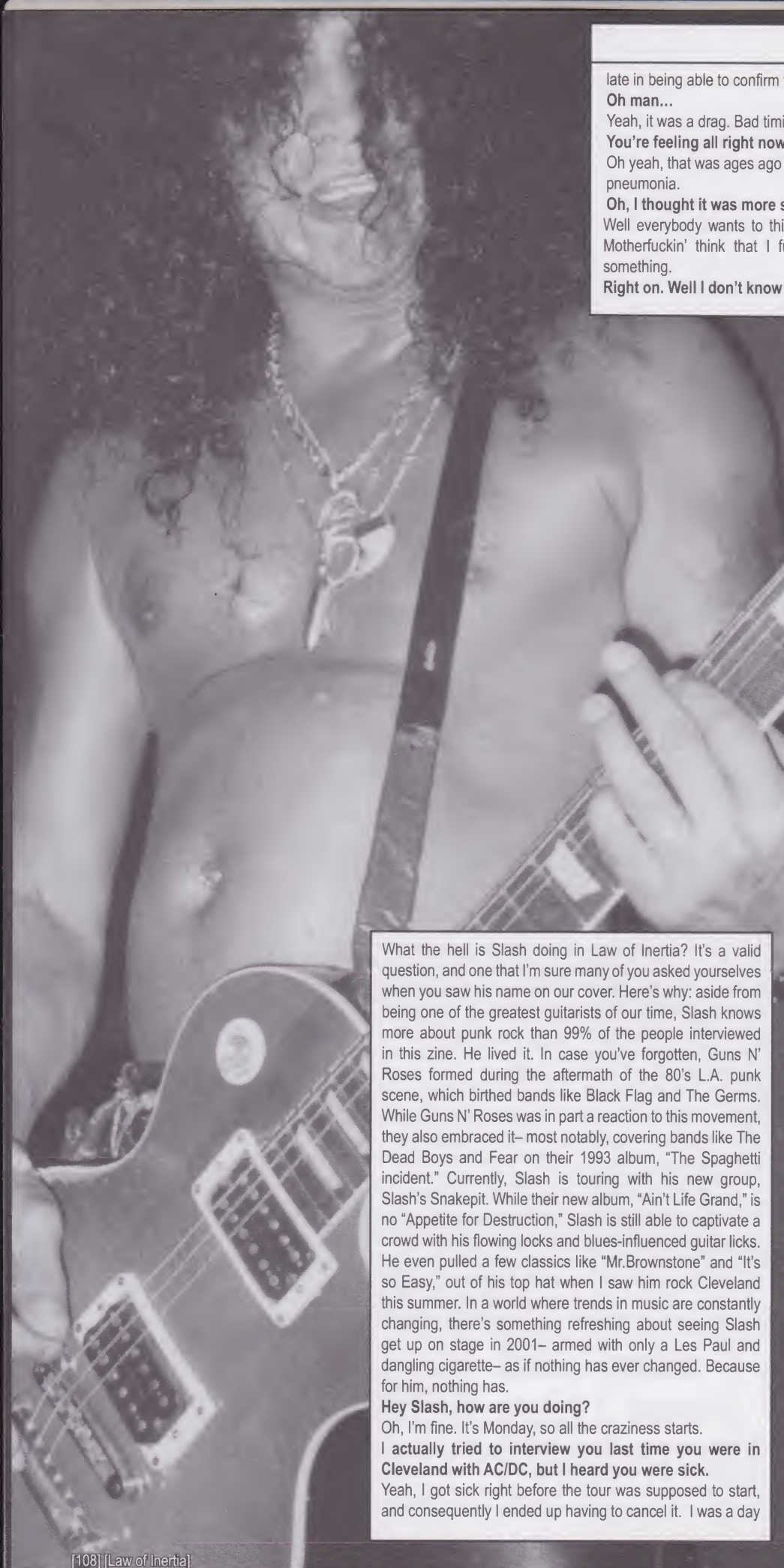




# SLASH

*by Jonah*





late in being able to confirm whether I was going to be able to go or not.

**Oh man...**

Yeah, it was a drag. Bad timing.

**You're feeling all right now, everything's cool?**

Oh yeah, that was ages ago (laughter). I was only sick for a week; it was no big deal. I had pneumonia.

**Oh, I thought it was more serious.**

Well everybody wants to think it was more serious, because I'm Slash, for christsakes! Motherfuckin' think that I fuckin' OD'd and was found in a garbage can in Italy or something.

**Right on. Well I don't know if you're familiar with our magazine, but it's sort of a punk rock...**

Don't take offense, but I don't pay attention to any magazines, except for at the dentist's office or whatever.

**Understood. So you were around during the beginning of the LA Punk scene, right?**

I was around for it. It was one of the dumbest farces in the music scene when it finally came on. You know, it's so typical for L.A. to jump on the bandwagon and make it fashionable. There were a couple genuinely cool punk bands that came out of LA, that I thought really held up. I think X was great. I never really considered X being punk, but they were stuck in the middle of that whole thing. Other than that, most of the other ones...what's-his-face's-band, The Germs...

**Darby Crash?**

Yeah, the Germs were just a pathetic excuse for a punk band (laughter). I was actually working at the Whiskey when that was all happening.

**Did you see Black Flag when they were coming up?**

Yeah, actually I auditioned one of the singers from Black Flag at a point there where me, and Duff, and Steven Adler were looking for a singer.

**Really?**

Yeah. You know what, I haven't mentioned that in years.

**Do you listen to any newer punk bands?**

The newer ones? I haven't been exposed to what I would consider a punk band in years. Not a new one, anyway. If there are any and they're on MTV or anything like that, then that's not punk (laughter). I know that there's bands playing locally on the circuit and I always find out about them—like they played the night before or something like that— but it's really not something I'm paying a hell of a lot of attention to.

**Well I always thought you had the 'punk ideology.'**

Oh, it's more of an attitude. But when you say 'punk'— it's like someone was asking me questions about new wave and heavy metal and punk the other day— they came at these sort of weird times. Not weird times, but all a sudden they become these little movements, right? Now punk was significant to me, from England, as far as I was concerned because of where it all came from. So that made sense, you know? It's a different look to me as opposed to rock n' roll in the first place. Rock n' roll in general really stems from oppression as it is. Especially the way that the government is going, and the lifestyle that's sort of being handed to you on a paper plate. I thought punk was definitely the catalyst for a lot of the youth being able to speak out against government. Then someone was talking about new wave in the 80's, and then big hair, and heavy metal, and all that stuff. I understood where heavy metal was coming from—that wasn't really what you would call a movement, it was just another form of rock n' roll that had a slightly different edge to it. So at this particular point in time, I can't even understand where punk would necessarily be coming from. Depending on what they were saying, I don't see where punk is totally relevant as a movement in this day and age. Although I understand why it could be....

What the hell is Slash doing in Law of Inertia? It's a valid question, and one that I'm sure many of you asked yourselves when you saw his name on our cover. Here's why: aside from being one of the greatest guitarists of our time, Slash knows more about punk rock than 99% of the people interviewed in this zine. He lived it. In case you've forgotten, Guns N' Roses formed during the aftermath of the 80's L.A. punk scene, which birthed bands like Black Flag and The Germs. While Guns N' Roses was in part a reaction to this movement, they also embraced it— most notably, covering bands like The Dead Boys and Fear on their 1993 album, "The Spaghetti incident." Currently, Slash is touring with his new group, Slash's Snakepit. While their new album, "Ain't Life Grand," is no "Appetite for Destruction," Slash is still able to captivate a crowd with his flowing locks and blues-influenced guitar licks. He even pulled a few classics like "Mr. Brownstone" and "It's so Easy," out of his top hat when I saw him rock Cleveland this summer. In a world where trends in music are constantly changing, there's something refreshing about seeing Slash get up on stage in 2001— armed with only a Les Paul and dangling cigarette— as if nothing has ever changed. Because for him, nothing has.

**Hey Slash, how are you doing?**

Oh, I'm fine. It's Monday, so all the craziness starts.

**I actually tried to interview you last time you were in Cleveland with AC/DC, but I heard you were sick.**

Yeah, I got sick right before the tour was supposed to start, and consequently I ended up having to cancel it. I was a day



**Especially with Bush coming in to power...**

I think now would be a good time. It's been done already; it would have to have a different label put on it. The thing is, I don't like labels, and I don't like pigeonholing bands that have a particular sound or a look as to one unit of identity. But that's inevitable, it makes it easier for people to understand.

**One thing that always stuck in my head about you was in your 1991 Rolling Stone cover story when you said you weren't going to wear a Budweiser shirt if they sponsored your tour. I thought that attitude embodied the punk rock ethic.**

Well, that's just a simple personal preference type of statement.

**You've said that you're the antithesis of everything popular, how so?**

Well, the antithesis of whatever has been going on in this industry, yeah (laughter). I don't fit in, you know? The popular music culture, I'm definitely not a part of. Guns N' Roses was definitely not a part of what was going on in '85, and I wasn't a part of what was going on in '95, and I probably won't be a part of what's going on in 2005. I always manage to stay out there, but I do it the way that I do it.

**Your response to the Napster controversy is very interesting, you've said that MTV doesn't have to pay to play videos, but the radio has to pay...**

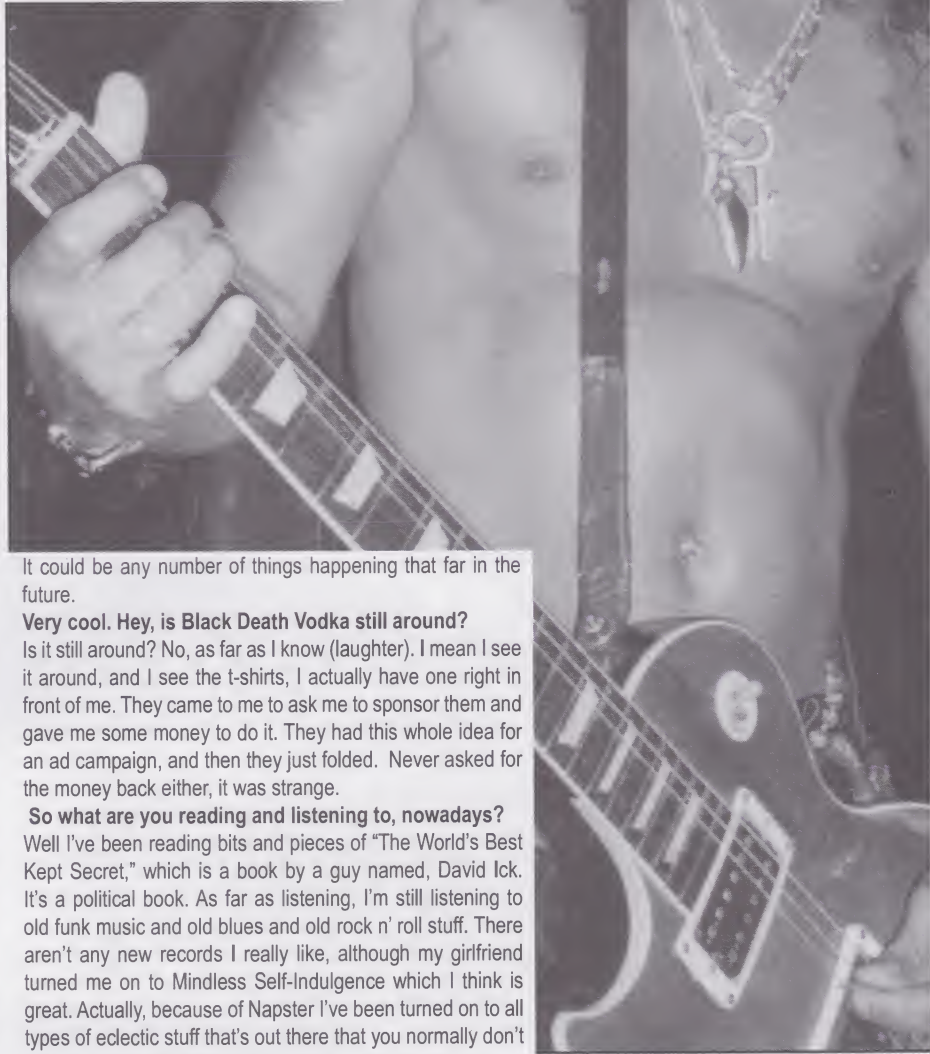
Yeah, well actually to tell you the truth it used to be a pay to play thing, I think it's changed a little, over the years as far as MTV goes. But as far as Napster is concerned, I thought Napster was great, man. I really did. But I thought it needed some sort of cap put on it before it became a standard of the industry that was so fixed that nobody had any control over it anymore. The way that it was headed meant that it was going to put a serious dent in the business itself. Not to say that the business itself isn't screwed and always has been, but I think that Napster was going to take what all of us collectively musicians have been working on: Trying to control the rights to our own music and masters, and hold the strings to what does and doesn't happen to our music, and our money especially. I think we've all gotten a lot smarter over the years, and realized what a farce the music business has been, and always was since its inception. You definitely don't need Napster to come along and just really screw that up even worse (laughter).

**That doesn't seem like a popular opinion among established artists like yourself, who stand at losing the most money from Napster.**

The real complaint about Napster from most of the people who vocally said anything on the big media scale, was because of money. It's funny because the people who say the most about it are the people who have the most money. I don't really get that. I think a lot of people should probably keep their mouths shut. I think someone responsible with a good heart and good intentions that is actually in the business, say a manager or a lawyer, should be the one to go out and make some statements having to do with the pros and cons of Napster and the companies like them. I think it'll be interesting to see, like by the year 2010, what solid developments have been made between now and then.

**What do you think Slash will be doing in 2010?**

You're talking to a person who doesn't look that far into the future, but I would imagine I'd be probably be heavily immersed in working on a record or a tour or maybe something completely different... I have no idea. I know what I'm doing immediately right now, and I know that's going to continue into the next record. You look at these things as cycles. They don't have necessarily what you'd call a beaten path, but there's sort of a straight line when you're making a record and then touring behind it. But you'll always take sort of a quick left turn here and there for a second, and then bounce back on the main road.



It could be any number of things happening that far in the future.

**Very cool. Hey, is Black Death Vodka still around?**

Is it still around? No, as far as I know (laughter). I mean I see it around, and I see the t-shirts, I actually have one right in front of me. They came to me to ask me to sponsor them and gave me some money to do it. They had this whole idea for an ad campaign, and then they just folded. Never asked for the money back either, it was strange.

**So what are you reading and listening to, nowadays?**

Well I've been reading bits and pieces of "The World's Best Kept Secret," which is a book by a guy named, David Ick. It's a political book. As far as listening, I'm still listening to old funk music and old blues and old rock n' roll stuff. There aren't any new records I really like, although my girlfriend turned me on to Mindless Self-Indulgence which I think is great. Actually, because of Napster I've been turned on to all types of eclectic stuff that's out there that you normally don't pick up just walking through the aisles in the record store.

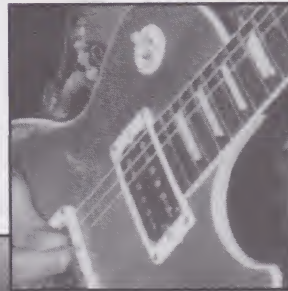
**Do you get involved in politics at all?**

Do I get involved with politics? I'm surrounded by politics. As far as world global politics, no. I pay attention to whatever's on CNN because I'm in hotels all the time, but for the most part I'm not somebody who advocates a lot about politics. I have my own feelings on certain decisions that get made, or with certain ideologies that are a part of our modern culture which I disagree with. But I don't make them public knowledge; I'm not into that. Although I can stand to say, with everyone else, that Bush is an idiot.

**Agreed. Well I'll let you go. I really appreciate you doing this man.**

Oh, it's not even a problem, have a really good day.

**Photos by Jonah**





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# mr. lady



by maria cotomero





Starting your own business can be a very rewarding thing... the ultimate middle finger to the proverbial Man. But starting your own business can also be a very tricky and scary venture if you are not totally aware of the road ahead. Being your own boss means not having to answer to anyone, but you have to make decisions that won't put yourself in debt or negatively affect the goal for which you are striving. Experience in your field of pursuit is invaluable, but having others to follow and look to for advice can make a world of difference in building your dream, avoiding mistakes, and being successful. As a small business owner, of Blue Ghost Publicity, which I run out of my home office, I felt it was important, not only for myself, but also for others in the D.I.Y. community, to sit down and exchange experiences with other small business owners. For my first interview, I wanted to interview Kaia Wilson who co-runs, along with Tammy Rae Carland, Mr. Lady Records, a female, queer-run record label and video distributor. Kaia is an amazing artist and a brilliant song writer. Mr. Lady is a creative record label that offers interesting, innovative, inspiring, and politically aware art and music. I felt Kaia to be a perfect role model as a strong woman who refuses to compromise her political beliefs while surviving in a corporate society.

**Why did you start Mr. Lady? What made you say, "I'm going to be a small business owner"?** I, myself, couldn't wake up every morning anymore and go to work for someone who had no morals. I couldn't work projects that my heart was not in.

Hmmm... you know we get that every single time and I still don't... I should just write it down so I can have my answer and not have to think about it anymore. We started it to make lots of money... (laughs) We started it because Tammy Rae is a video artist and I'm a musician and we wanted to put out our own work so Mr. Lady is a record label and a video distributor; but we only do distribution through our mail order, so it's pretty low key. Then we started to put out work by our friends and other people that we thought were making really amazing work in terms of their politics and their art. We wanted to be a feminist queer business. We wanted to sort of cater to that audience, you know. We don't consider ourselves to be exclusionary or what people call us all the time – pigeon-holing ourselves – or whatever. We started it to have control over our own work and to also represent other artists in a way that I think they would want to be represented and be affiliated with a label that has a political mindset. We don't have contracts and we wanted to start a really good business in terms of it being really fair and honest.

**When I decided to go on my own, I didn't really have a clear vision or a business plan on paper. I just knew I wanted to work with punk music publicity and I wanted to be my own boss. Did you have a clear vision of what you wanted? Did you feel like this was going to be your "career" or something on the side like a "hobby"?**

Not really as either. It started as, "We'll put out our own work and see what happens." And then, "We'll just put out our friends work and see what happens." It wasn't really meant to be a hobby because there is a lot of hard work that's not really that fun to be honest. If we were gonna start a hobby we want to do something a little more fun. It's definitely a business in some ways, but it has felt like a volunteer community service up until recently because we had lost a lot of money. But we have been able to break even and make a small profit.

**Did you feel like you needed to fill a void in the industry?**

Well, there weren't any other options that felt viable for us. At the time, there were no other record labels that we felt could represent us, because I had just quit Team Dresh and I wasn't ready to work with either of my bandmates' labels at that point. Although, those would be the only other labels that I could see myself wanting to be affiliated with, which were Candy Ass and Chainsaw.

There was just no other label I felt, either of us thought, would be able to market us, you know... what we did, have the same politics as us.... We didn't want to work with "the Man." I wanted to work with a lady... but the two labels were just not right for us in whatever way.

**So how did you get started? What was step one in creating Mr. Lady?**

Step one was working with our distributor at the time, which was Revolver. They helped us a lot since they did all the pressing. They funded the cost of all the manufacturing of the CDs and LPs of our first release. Our first two releases were distributed through Revolver and because they funded the manufacturing costs, we didn't have a crazy amount of debt. We were able to pay for the recording of my first record and the next Butchies record... but we went into some debt. We started Mr. Lady when we were living in Indiana then moved to Durham. We opened a bank account with... I can't even remember the exact amount, but it was \$35 or something. We opened a partnership account at our bank. That's what we had to put in it. The guy thought we were fucking nuts! Tammy Rae's got a lot of good credit card potential. She has good credit and I hardly have any. I only contributed to two credit cards with \$500 limits so it was mostly Tammy Rae's credit cards that we charged all our shit to. When we switched distributors to Mordam, our current distributor, we had to do all the manufacturing costs ourselves. So for a while before our records were breaking even, we were in severe ass debt. Scary.

**What did you do when you realized that?**

We put out a Le Tigre record. (laughs) We didn't try to rectify it. You know, we always tried to get pretty good promotions going so we could get written about and we figured that would be a good thing. We always encouraged our bands to tour. We put out Le Tigre, which at the moment that was our saving grace. Because then we also put out records by debut artists and those haven't nearly broken even. And we put out some that were more risky like seven inches and seven inches don't sell which is so depressing... (laughs) You spend so much money on them and then they're just sitting there. But now I think we've come to a point where we've actually figured out a philosophy.... We release things now by artists who are going to be doing it for a while and that they're gonna tour. We want to do something where we don't put out things

by people who haven't toured already as an artist or a band because that's one thing we've learned. We're now working on our 17th release. We need folks who are going to be able to tour on it and we also can't take too many chances on it, unfortunately, with new artists because there's a big risk... with our money. We're probably going to do comps every couple of years that would showcase a bunch of artists that we would like to put out their records, but we can't. We have a new comp coming out really soon. It's like 18 bands on it. Some of which are really well known and others which this is their first thing.

**Do you ever feel resistance as a woman or as a queer woman owning and running your own business?**

Yeah, sometimes it's really insidious. It's hard. Sometimes, how you feel, as a woman, you're just being paranoid or whatever... It is happening that there is homophobia and there is lesbophobia, actually very specific to us. This is part of the reason being in the Butchies and running Mr. Lady, there's this part of you that knows part of the reason that you're not as successful as a couple of other people you could put yourself next to has to do with the fact that you're—we're lesbians and that we're not just lesbians, we're really out about it. We don't back down about it. We're going to call ourselves feminists. We're going to call ourselves queer and we're going to call ourselves political and activists. We're not going to back down to saying this. It's not considered very cool in the indie world or of course in the outside world either, but in our world, the indie world, it's still not very cool to be political. I mean hardly anyway. I don't know. Like the world we're in – I guess we're in the punk world – I guess... I don't know what it is. (laughs)

is a totally sexist, racist, homophobic world. It's not like some transcendent world of righteous whatever. (laughs) It's still the same fucked-up world as anything else. Sometimes it can be just as awful as anything other than the outside label world... the corporate world...

**Being an outlet for feminist and queer art, do you feel like you are filling a niche or would you like to crossover to other audiences... like in the "straight" indie rock world or whatever you want to call it.**

No. We feel like we're in our own little world, our own little niche that's partially inspired by feminist record labels of the yesteryear of the 1970s. All these awesome records exist that when I worked for Lady Slipper distributor, I learned about a lot of different music and different labels... but were more along a world we would want to







be part of... Maybe even a world of musicians that are really amazing too... it's pretty separatist, the indie world... The Butchies... we would really like to be considered really great musicians and be respected in a different community than the indie community. We want to be respected as activists... and be really fun to watch at our shows. We also want to be respected for having a certain quality to our music. The indie world isn't necessarily our world, you know. Yeah, we are an independent label and we do things independent of corporations in terms of where we fit in genre wise... I think that, I mean our music will get lumped in there for the most part, but we don't really want to align ourselves with that so much because it doesn't feel like we fit in anyway.

**So you don't mind reaching out to or playing to just one kind of audience?**

We don't do that necessarily. Yes we have queer feminist-minded audiences, and at the very least, all of our shows are safe spaces for that, but I think we have to venture over to other communities that are considered straight people or what not. (laughs) People who would or people who wouldn't necessarily like our music might like our music if they did see us live. You know, we've gotten a lot of response... I'm sure if there are people who hear us on the radio who might not pay much attention, but if they see us live, they really, really like us-- like 75 year old ladies. We have that experience a lot, where people like the metal guys and the sound crew and the techies are they're really into us. We totally appreciate anyone who wants to be our fan. Anybody who respects what we're doing, we'll respect them back. It's not like we don't want to sell more records for one, because we want to make a living at what we're doing. We're not going to sacrifice our ideals or integrity to do so, you know, the things that we hold sacred. But we would like to expand our audience, sure, but we're also happy playing to just the queer scene. Sure that's fun. People are like "preaching to the converted" kinda thing. But we're not preaching number one and number two, we're making it to be a good space for people and that sometimes is just as important as trying to convert someone to your values-- making homophobia extinct.

**After making a ton of mistakes and getting taken advantage of a couple of times, I feel more in tune with how to run this ship. Do you feel more business savvy now?**

Yeah, I'm not really a business person. Tammy Rae Carland, she is the real resident here and she is basically why the label is -- I mean, you ask how we got ourselves out of the money problem and it's just that she is really great. She's the accountant. She's the mastermind behind it all. She's the person who has more of a business savvy, more of an idea of how to keep things organized and afloat than I would ever have had. So, if it weren't for her, the label would be just like blah. The label would have probably never happened for one. She's made it what it is today and I've learned a lot in order to maintain it. This is my job pretty much. I clean houses but I spend 8 hours a day, you know, especially when we have releases out. Anyway, business savvy. I've had to learn a hell of a whole lot to be able to do it. And we've both learned together in terms of figuring out how we're gonna release things in the future. We do have to think about strategy in that unfortunately you have to think about press and marketing. We're probably the weirdest label because we hardly even put ads in anything. We figure we'd really rather push for a review or an article in a magazine than out an ad in. Maybe we would do something in the future, where, for a tour we would put an ad in a magazine that had the tour dates listed. I think that's a smart ad idea... smarter than saying just "new record!"

**Have you ever been taken advantage of by people in the music industry?**

I'm trying to think if we've ever been taken advantage of. I feel like as a band member, I've figured out how not to be taken advantage of through years of having been taken advantage of. But as a label person... I don't think that we have. It's the other point of being seen as, you know, a stupid exclusive label. That's more of a challenge than being taken advantage of.

**Learning from mistakes is the best. Ha! Have you made any crucial mistakes and how do you overcome them or restructure?**

One of our biggest mistakes was not checking the films on a record. This is a really funny story. We make the film here in our town from our artwork and we did not double-check our LP film for the Le Tigre album. So on the cover of the album there are three pictures, one picture of each band member. There was something in the file that had corroded one of the pictures and it had to be Kathleen's picture. So the first 1,000 LP or something had a white space for Kathleen's face There was just Johanna and Sadie, but not Kathleen. We had to have stickers made and sticker 1,000 records. You know, but we figure they will be collector's items. (laughs) At least they are the kind of band that sells a lot of things. If that happened to the Butchies, we'd be like "Fuck!" That was our first

mistake. Now we always, always check the film, always. Always double-check your shit. I guess the other thing you could call a mistake -- I don't want to call it a mistake, because I really love all the releases we have -- it is a mistake sometimes to spend too much money on recording and stuff. You have to really figure out what you're going to spend your money on. We just have to figure out budgets a little more with how that person is going to sell and talk to that person about it too. We've made some mistakes in overspending.

**One of my biggest problems is when my bands expect way too much. They expect to get press all over the place when it's just not gonna happen. Especially with an unknown band who has never toured and only has an EP out. They compare their press to some of my other bands' press placements. Have you ever run into problems with your bands? Have they ever expected you to give them more or do more for them press, marketing, tour support, or radio wise?**

We give so much control to the individual bands that they'll either talk to us about what they want or they'll be in charge of contacting whoever's working on the record. They'll see all the emails and requests and they'll be able to make the decision. I feel as though we've never had any problems with any of our artists. The Butchies can be a real pain in the ass! (laughs) just kidding. But we think about these things. Some people don't even talk to us at all about it. They have no idea of what's going on and we kind of do it for them... in terms of promotion and the budget and stuff. Other people think more about it. The Butchies do think more about it. We think if we spend this much on recording, we can spend this much on this or that. We're very open. People can do whatever they want really in terms of press and what they want. We've never had problems with people wanting more money. I think it's more like if the band -- this doesn't come up but if it did -- it would be like if you sell enough stuff that we're gonna break even and make a small profit, then we can talk about spending more money. But if you're not a band that's gonna do that, you can't really demand putting your label in debt. I mean obviously the record label is taking a chance putting out certain things and we won't ever recoup that money. It's totally money out of our pocket. But other record labels aren't as nice and caring as us. (laughs) So people are pretty happy. All our artists are our friends. It's all good. We're not sloppy or anything. We're not gonna screw anybody over and they are not gonna screw us over. We run a good business and we give people what they need. I don't think that there would be any problem. It's not like we're not gonna pay our half of the rent or whatever.

**I have often thought about the pros and cons of expanding in the future or hiring staff or if I even want to be more than a one girl operation. I'm not sure I want to put responsibility on other people, especially when it comes to my own company. Do you want the label to grow? Do you want to hire employees?**

No, not really. We have several different interns who have done varying degrees of work, which we are very appreciative of. We have Melissa do our design work. She's the closest thing we have to an employee because we do pay her, but not nearly as much as she deserves.

Other than that we have hired this one person to do this one job for us that took a couple of days. Me and Tammy Rae are it and we pay ourselves hardly anything. We've only been able to pay ourselves for about a year. I think what we would like is to not grow too big, but to maybe employ one or two people to do the stuff you have to do to maintain it. Maybe just even one other person and then me. That would be the goal. Not to have a big huge place. Not to have a big huge business. We don't want that because it's not our life goal to have this be the biggest, greatest, indie record label in the world.

**How do you split your time between being a business girl and playing with the Butchies and going on tour?**

Yeah. That's a problem for me and for Tammy Rae because she's a full time professor of photography and video and so when I go on tour, she has to do all this work on top of her job where she teaches all the time. That's been the biggest challenge. We're heading into our 6th year in March as a couple, so this is an emotionally difficult thing -- figuring out a way that Tammy Rae is not laden with work when I go on tour. When I'm on tour, I'm clearly not doing any Mr. Lady work, which is difficult, really difficult. So that's why we would want to hire someone. It has been a little hard because we run it out of a room in our house. It's hard to sometimes start working.

**God, I know that one. It's also hard to tear myself away from my office area. It's always there. And I never have time to play music or paint or go out...**

In some ways it's a constant job. It's a job we sometimes work on the weekends, you know.

**What's your biggest challenge?**

Hopefully we can get to a point where we won't have to do that. I don't like that and it also takes away from-- I think to a certain extent-- my ability to write songs or do other things, be it creative with my band. Or for Tammy Rae it's the time she could be doing art because she's a photographer. So that's the biggest challenge -- figuring out a way so that we can manage the business and maintain the business without sacrificing our own art.

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# Kill Your Radio #1

Lance Hahn of the J Church  
discusses his top ten favorite records  
of all time in no particular order

## MINUTEMEN "Double Nickels On The Dimes" 2xLP

This record was an epiphany for me. When I was in high school and a hell of a lot less confident in myself, I was pretty worried about things like "what's punk?" and "how can I be punk?" This record helped show me how not to care about those things. There's such a wide variety of musical styles and feels subjugated by the recording process and the band's own information. They even cover fucking Steely Dan which most people thought was really un-cool. It showed me that being cool is irrelevant. I also loved the thought that a band could come up with so much material in a year... Less than a year... I'm still inspired by the workman-like attitude.

## THE WHO "The Kids Are Alright" 2xLP

This is the soundtrack to their amazing movie. One day while walking around after school with nothing to do, I found a \$20 bill on the ground. I hadn't really given myself over to punk yet and was mostly into Queen and Cheap Trick. But I felt obligated to check out all the older stuff that I had read about in Creem and Rolling Stone. The film, "The Kids Are Alright" had just opened so I went over to the theater near the University to spend my newfound money checking it out (I was probably 14 or so at the time). I was one of the only people in the audience. But I was so engrossed by the movie that as soon as it ended I went to the record store and bought the soundtrack before making my way back home. This amazing record is a must for the version of "A Quick One" alone. It's also the definitive version (I think) of "Sparks" which is one of my favorite parts of "Tommy".

## THE CLASH "London Calling" 2xLP

My Uncle knew that I liked rock. He didn't know what to get me for Christmas. He heard that "London Calling" was album of the year, according to Rolling Stone. So, he got it for me. I hated it. I listened to it a second time and it became one of my all time favorites. From there I backtracked and that's how I got into punk rock. I know a lot of people that thought of this record as the band's downfall. But in some ways it's much less produced than "Give 'Em Enough Rope" and I like the way that it feels like they didn't really care where the songs started and ended. It's not slick and there are no slick edits which I learned to hate in the '80s. Letting songs organically start and stop was really insightful for me.

## THE VELVET UNDERGROUND "with Nico" LP

To this day I try to emulate what Lou Reed was doing with the Velvets. The way I write a lot of my lyrics are directly influenced by Lou Reed's storytelling ability as well as The Modern Lovers (who I love even if they were mostly a Bostonian take on the Velvets). This is probably the record I listen to the most of theirs. But "White Light / White Heat" runs a close second. It's hard to say what's my favorite record of all time. But the Velvet Underground are definitely my favorite band. Probably 50% or more of all J Church is me trying to write "Sunday Morning" or "Waiting For My Man."

## HUSKER DU "New Day Rising" LP

Shamelessly catchy and shamelessly loose, I love this record because it merged the white noise and pop of the Velvet Underground with contemporary punk rock (of the time). Again, Husker Du is another band that I love a lot and "Zen Arcade" runs a close second. But this is the one I listen to the most. I've bought it three times from wearing it out. I suppose this is one of our most obvious choices. I've certainly been accused of ripping off "I Apologize" from time to time. I can't really defend myself except by saying that I was probably trying to rip off "Celebrated Summer" as well!

## NEIL YOUNG "Harvest" LP

Nothing calms my nerves like listening to this record. It's so beautiful and so sad, I'm sometimes surprised that it was such a successful

record. I don't know that today's MTV generation could appreciate a record like this. This record totally destroys me every time I listen to it. The recording is so warm, you feel like they're playing for you right on the porch. I have some great memories of getting really drunk with Jonathan Seagull from Camper Van and playing the song "Words" over and over on the jukebox. Incidentally, my worst case of plagiarism ever involves that song and a song called "Signals" by Cringer.

## BITES OF SPRING LP

I was tempted to say that it's the only DC band that mattered. But that's just me being obnoxious. I'm, obviously, totally inspired by that scene. Minor Threat, The Faith, Scream, Marginal Man, Government Issue, Ignition, Beefeater, Circus Lupus, Jawbox... Shit I could go on and on. They're all bands that really mattered. I remember buying an issue of Flipside mostly because it had an interview with Conflict. That issue also included an interview with Rites Of Spring and I was totally fascinated. It was such a great interview. I remember being so obsessed with this record when it came out. There were so many wild stories about the band crying onstage and inadvertently breaking their guitars and shit. Totally wild! In the mid-80s, this record was such a breath of fresh air. It really changed everything.

## CRASS "Stations Of The Crass" 2xLP

I don't think people give the band enough credit for the music they were creating. Yeah, it's a good example of a band that weren't doing typical "punk rock" and therefore people assumed that they were a crap punk band. In reality, they were doing something radically different that most punks don't really have the ability to appreciate. I also think that there is a fantastic use of the symbol and image to work to the band's benefit. I used to feel a little scared of Crass records when I saw them in the bins. It wasn't safe rock-n-roll like most punk rock was. But like other teenage vices, the fact that it probably scared my parents even more led me to check this record out. The fact that I had to work to understand it and appreciate it made me love it even more. For me as a teenager it was sex and drugs and revolution (forget the rock-n-roll)...

## ALBERT AYLER "Spiritual Unity" LP

I really wanted to put Ornette Coleman's "Free Jazz" down, but I really have to admit that I listen to this record much more. I think it's safe to say that there wouldn't be Sonic Youth or "Sister Ray" or The Ex for that matter if it weren't for the avant-garde and free jazz movement of the '60s. I find that whole scene totally inspirational both in their re-invention of the musical process as well as their ability to connect sophisticated political ideas with their music. This record especially tells me that musicians can play whatever the fuck they want and the standard rules that every entertainer lives by can never apply to artists. It also gives me great hope in the idea that even though nobody really notices what I'm doing; I can still strive to do something great.

## THE ROLLING STONES "Exile On Main Street" 2xLP

Aw, I should really know better. But I've always had a spot in my heart for the Stones. The first record I ever bought as a child was "Brown Sugar". I even remember taking a bath with the record because I loved it so much. What can I say? I love this record. Like "London Calling", the organic way the songs start and stop really works for me. The horns are so bright, I feel like I'm there in the studio. It really sounds like a party. It sounds like a lot of wine and booze and drugs and fucking. It's soaking with it. I remember some Christians at my school saying that the band was Satanists. I was pretty disappointed that they only dabbled in the imagery and even then only metaphorically. Satan rules!



# Kill Your Radio #2

Tim Barry of Avail  
discusses his top ten favorite records  
of all time in no particular order

## **"State of the Union"** A Dischord Benefit Compilation.

If I got real in-depth here I'd have to mention all of the DC bands from the 80's who made a profound impact on myself and the rest of AVAIL, so I'm taking the easy way out and listing a comp that many of them are featured on. The list includes Scream, Marginal Man, Ignition, Soulside, Christ on a Crutch, Kingface, Shudder to Think and others. The song that really did it for me was the 3 song "Swann Street." It is one of the most inspirational songs I've heard in the underground and one that has had a tremendous amount of influence on my music writing.

## **Billy Bragg** "Talking With the Taxman About Poetry"

There is nothing that I love more than the simplicity of a guitar (electric or acoustic) and a voice. Not to mention songs with political and personal lyrical content. When I got this record I couldn't stop listening to it. Today it remains one of my all time favorites. Billy Bragg to me is the contemporary Woody Guthrie (the UK version), which leads me to the obvious next person on the list....

## **Woody Guthrie** "The Early Years"

I chose this record out of Woody's many releases and re-releases and best ofs and what not. "The Early Years" has a good mix of many songs. I can see why many would be turned off by Woody Guthrie's Okie drawl and lack of guitar skill, but to me that is what makes him real and honest. He wrote about his own life experiences and for those on the bottom of the economic ladder. Like Billy Bragg, the words are personal and political. Can't go wrong with old Woody.

## **Corrosion Of Conformity** "Animosity"

Ass backward, redneck metal-political-punk from Raleigh, North Carolina. For a Virginia boy coming f age in the 80's and really into both punk and metal these guys were my heroes. "Animosity" is still one of my favorites.

## **Jimmie Rodgers** "Train Whistle Blues"

This is country from the 30's. Jimmie Rodgers was a railroad worker gone country star. Best known as the Yodeling Brakeman. Every song on this record has to do with trains. I'm a train freak from hell, so naturally this one hits home and has since the first time I heard it. I've spent many-a-night holed up on some sidetrack in the boxcar of some random freight train in the middle of Georgia (or wherever) staring at the stars singing Jimmie Rodgers songs to myself. "Will there be freight

trains in heaven, boxcars in which we can hide, will they have respect for the hobo blah, blah, blah." You get the idea.

## **Johnny Cash** "The Sun Years"

Not a day goes by where I don't listen to at least one Johnny Cash song. I've been listening to his newer releases as of late, but "The Sun Years" is the one that hooked me. I love this man's music so much that I can't explain it in words.

## **Billy Bragg and Wilco** "Mermaid Avenue"

Woody Guthrie's daughter chose Billy Bragg over Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan to do this project. Here's the deal: Woody left behind thousands of sheets of words to songs, but no chord progressions or notes indicating the musical content he had intended. Billy Bragg recruited Wilco to compose music around the words of the late Woody Guthrie. Thus "Mermaid Avenue" was released. This was a dream release for me and it didn't let me down. Some of the songs are so goofy they make me sick, but some are so fucking heartfelt and moving they make me cry.

## **Born Against** "Nine Patriotic Hymns for Children"

In the early 90's I was about to give up on the "punk" music crap. Nothing inspired, everything bored me. Then came along this record. Suddenly I found myself excited again. In my eyes this is one of the best punk records of all time.

## **Steve Earle** "El Corazon"

"Come back Emma Goldman rise up old Joe Hill the barricades are going up and they cannot break our will, come back to us Malcolm X and Martin Luther King we're marching into Selma as the bells of freedom ring..." Steve Earle is a country singer from Tennessee. There are no country singers I've heard in the last 10 years that have words as radical as his. He is amazing, "El Corazon" is amazing.

## **Strike Anywhere** "Chorus of One"

I have yet to mention any bands from my home town of Richmond, Virginia so here goes. Strike Anywhere is the one to date that I have been listening to the most. This record will go down in the history books as one of the greatest punk releases of all time. Guaranteed.



# Kill Your Radio #3

Bob Nanna formerly of Braid and now of Hey Mercedes discusses his top ten favorite records although he wanted you to know he easily could have written twenty

## Modest Mouse "The Lonesome Crowded West"

I was one of 10 crowded into a van. It was winter in Germany and sure enough there was a coat of snow on the ground. It was our first time in Europe and behind the wheel was a man that we had just met the day before. As we are pulling into a rest area, the van starts to slide. "Uh oh," our driver (a little too) calmly mutters. We run smack dab into a sign post... Adrienne had made Rob a tape of "The Lonesome Crowded West" and we passed it back and forth the entire trip, much to the dismay of everyone else. Whenever someone would have the courage to throw it in the actual van's tape player, it would elicit mass groaning. We actually stayed at most of the clubs overnight in lined up mattresses. Someone recommended that we sleep with our wallets inside our sleeping bags. Every night someone had to stay in the van to "watch" over the equipment. The worst thing that ever happened was somebody running over the top of the van while Chris was sleeping inside. Come to think of it, he was pretty drunk, so he could have imagined the whole thing. While driving from Lyon, France to Geneva, Switzerland, Paul commented about the end of "Truckers Atlas" - "Do you think they've played this part long enough?" And it was all too fitting, given the seemingly endless highway to nowhere that scrolled out in front of us. And after our last show in Munich, I found myself drenched in sweat, literally stuffed into the back of a station wagon. I had to lay down across our equipment to try and sleep. And Jim from the Get Up Kids decided it would be a good idea to put on Minor Threat! I put on the headphones and Modest Mouse successfully drowned it out. My European soundtrack.

## Red House Painters "Old Ramon"

I have this annoying habit of taking naps once I get home from work. Being cooped up for so long in front of a computer just drains the life out of you. So that, around 1 PM, you mentally crash. At 5, you physically crash. At 8, you wake up refreshed and ready to get on with the night. "Old Ramon" is the soundtrack to the relaxing late night right now. It may seem odd to put such a new release as one of my top 10, but I'll just be "one of those guys" and say that I had it for 6 months beforehand. By the time it was released every note was ingrained into my mind. Up until this point, I hated the Red House Painters. I was not lured in by "Songs for a Blue Guitar." I didn't buy into it. When an unnamed friend asked me to copy the unreleased "Old Ramon" CD for another unnamed friend, I accidentally left it in my computer. And out of curiosity I burned one for myself. We listened to it as we played Scrabble or Boggle or one of the many games I had around the house. The album literally jumped out at us. Remarkable. It actually refused to be background! "Wow, this is really good." The centerpiece of this grand album is "Cruiser," but my favorite track by far is "Void." It sneaks into an open door and hugs you. "Loosen and stretch its ancient strings until it sounds the way I feel..." Chills.

## Steely Dan "Aja"

As we were waiting to see Magnolia (opening night at the Biograph), Norm and I did some record browsing, which turned into buying, which was an all too typical event for me. I got Jeff Buckley's "Sketches for My Sweetheart..." on vinyl (because of an extra track), and for a measly 99 cents, I picked up "Aja"... Later in the night, we were so blown away by the movie, that I decided to forget my records at the coffee shop where we ate afterwards. Luckily somebody found them and I dropped by the next morning. I brought my prizes back to my apartment: one bedroom, three rooms with a deck, my first experience living alone. And I didn't like it one bit. There was a good four months that it will do me good to completely forget. I spent a lot of time sleeping instead of walking, writing instead of talking, working instead of enjoying life. "Aja" didn't leave the turntable for this whole period. I would sit at the computer or on the couch and play side one over and over. I knew exactly where the vinyl popped twice during "Black Cow." After an hour or three, I would flip the record and give side two a few hundred spins. It made me feel truly alive during this time, when I needed the aid.

## REM "Automatic for the People"

Many folks had tried to convert me to REM well before, but I just wasn't having it. I enjoyed my cassette copy of "Document" and busted it out now and again, but I never considered myself a hardcore fan like those folks. But if there was one song that pushed me over the edge, it was "Nightswimming." I was so foolish. I would make sultry tapes for dates and put "Star Me Kitten" on them. Sure that was an amazing song, but it should have been "Nightswimming" all along. I didn't realize this until recently... This album will forever be linked to my ultimate love for sleeping and dreaming. The whole thing goes by like a dream, actually, and you're only REALLY dreaming during "The Sidewinder Sleeps Tonight" (Ironically with "sleep" in the title?). For the rest of the album, you're in those middle stages. REM indeed.

## Pixies "Doolittle"

The first distinct memory I have of him was on my way to a high school baseball game. I was a sophomore, he was a freshman. He ran for track, I usually played "left out". Anyway, on the way to the field, he ran by the lot of us, looked at me and said "Hey Bob, bring us home a W" and made a W sign with his hands. It was all a joke for whomever he was running with. And I would come to realize the grand importance of making people laugh. So this clown became my bestest of friends. I introduced him to Naked Raygun and Fugazi. He introduced me to the Pixies. He really didn't seem like the Pixies-listening type, and neither did HIS friend who introduced HIM to the Pixies, but whatever. I guess you didn't have to outwardly show it by skateboarding or plugging your bands if you liked cool music. When I found out he played drums, we started up a band. As we were waiting in line to get pictures taken at homecoming or some dumb dance, we sang "Tame." We always put "Here Comes Your Man" on mix tapes we made for girls. I still have Black Francis' opening "Hey" from the song of the same name as the alert sound on my computer. I still have that best friend and we still adore this album.

## Kind of Like Spitting "Nothing Makes Sense Without It"

It was our first trip through Portland and we knew nobody. The opening band had no name. They were loud and sort of screamy, but we could tell that there was something special about the singer / guitar player. There just seemed to be a wealth of talent dying to be released. That night, we hung out with the band at the stinkiest, dirtiest, most run-down house I have ever seen to this day. We were warned not to touch the cat because it had scabies. You couldn't walk without stepping on something and there was not an inch of any flat surface visible. Junk everywhere. Ben, the singer of the band, didn't live there. He didn't have to be there. He was there because he wanted to talk to us. He was a brave man. Our next time through Portland, he interviewed us and gave us a demo of his solo stuff. It was good to see him and I put the tape into my bag and there it stayed for months. Gone unheard. (When I think about it now, what in the world could I have been doing that was any more important than that tape?) Third time through Portland and Damon said he was excited cause we were playing with Kind of Like Spitting. "Oh right, Ben" I said. He asked if I had listened to the tape. "Um, I don't know. I think I lost it." He loaned me his and suggested I take a listen. From that moment on, I was Ben's biggest fan. I became a missionary, attempting to convert everyone and anyone I could find... When the album came out, I already knew 90% of the songs by heart, but having them wrapped up in a nice little package with a ribbon on top was heavenly. I still love the guy.

## The Pogues "If I Should Fall From Grace with God"

My colleegetown house / apartment was located steps from the only health food store within miles and as luck would have it, the cheapest liquor store. A complete contradiction. We would balance healthy veggie sandwiches with cases of Rhinelander. And meanwhile, I was the only one in the house that was actually going to school, so it was



a blurry time for me. We'd practice in the basement, come upstairs, watch the Simpsons, drink Rhinelander and head out to whatever parties / shows Urbana had to offer. It was an amazing feeling, knowing that your #1 priority in Urbana was being in a band and school had dropped down to about #4, followed by religiously attending Dollar Pint Tuesdays at the Blind Pig... Often, my best friend would drive over from Indiana University, where he was rotting, and join in the festivities... And one night I distinctly remember Elizabeth from downstairs asking us at a party what all of the racket was up at our place. Turns out, we had been listening to The Pogues and were actually stomp-marching in a conga line to "Turkish Song of the Damned." It just seemed right at the time. It is such a fantastic album to seamlessly contain drunken melees like "Bottle of Smoke" and dramatic genius like "Thousands are Sailing." Go on you bastard!

#### Joni Mitchell "Blue"

The first Joni Mitchell album I ever heard was "Mingus". I bought it on cassette at a thrift store in Normal, IL and via sheer necessity (only a tape player available), I listened to it over and over while I was painting my new apartment. I wish I could say that the experimental nature of that album fused with the fumes of the paint creating some type of seemed utopia, but it didn't. It was just intriguing. The sad, well-calculated, bluesy voice over the pops and crackles of near-free jazz. Towards the end of my renovation, I knew the album pretty well and commented about it to Norm. He immediately recommended "Blue." I immediately borrowed it and I immediately fell in love. I realize "Mingus" may not be the best introduction to Joni Mitchell, but it worked wonders for me. "Blue" was an album that relied on Joni the storyteller as opposed to the meandering jazz leader. It became my quintessential trainride album. Passing through the northern reaches of industrial Chicago or the cornfields of middle Illinois, it still has the same staggering effect. It makes you tingle. Dramatic, yet playful. Ultimately can be translated for any occasion. Just playing in the background of *Almost Famous*, "River" gives me chills. Lucky for me, I take a lot of trains.

#### Jeff Buckley "Grace"

I was introduced to Mr. Buckley by a girl with whom I was completely enamored. So when she suggested I give the guy a listen, I was all ears. What I heard deeply moved me. The most angelic voice. A voice so beautiful and engrossing, that the music didn't even seem to matter once his lips were moving. It made me want to sing. Not to just yell out some words here and there, but to truly sing as if at that time it meant everything in the whole world. All of a sudden I wanted to work as hard as I could at it. I started taking vocal lessons. I bought numerous books on the subject. I altered my diet. At one lesson, my vocal teacher asked me what singers I admired. I remembered that I didn't say JB first. For every singer I named, she gave me a quick history of how each prepared and worked to get to the level that they reached. When I got to Jeff Buckley, she was speechless. She had no explanation. Finally she sighed and muttered "it must have been a cosmic blunder of sorts to give a human that voice. And that's why I think he was taken so early in life." I thought that was a bold, tragic thing to say.... So the enamored girl and I kissed in the living room to "Lilac Wine," and I spent the entire time torn between wanting to listen attentively or make out passionately. Why can't all decisions in life be that win-win?

#### The Lemonheads "It's a Shame About Ray"

The sun was shining into the bus, which was odd because I was expecting England to be perpetually foggy. I was 17. I was on a senior class trip and we were heading to some cliffs. One of our chaperones tried to get me to start singing as we went over Scarborough Fair, as if, being a music maniac, I knew the Simon & Garfunkel song. At the time, I didn't, so I just pretended like I was too shy. I may have been too drunk. In England the drinking age is 18, so my friends and I decided to use the trip to buy and consume as much alcohol legally as we could. Brilliant, right? I know I was only 17, but I never got carded. At our hotel, we

drank gin & tonics, not 'cause we knew we'd like it, just because we knew it was something that people order. My best friend at the time drank only Guinness. At the time, I would have rather drank a pint glass of mud. But times have changed. He ain't m'best friend no more and I enjoy an occasional Guinness (as a meal of course). Being that I went to a Catholic high school and our trip stretched over a Sunday, the lot of us were required to go to church. All the while I sat there in the pew, pretending I wasn't drunk, and calculating with my abacus how many Hail Marys it would take to get me out of this fiasco.

It was the dead of winter, yet the sun was warm, so we may as well have been in the Caribbean, compared to blustery Chicago. In London, we frequented a bar called the Tattersall, because it was the name of my best friend's band at the time. We tried to go out to a dance club, but we were all turned away because of my shoes. They were gym shoes. I felt bad about it, so I treated everybody to a round of gin & tonics. There was another bar near our London hotel that served all of these crazy shots with names like "Slippery Nipple" and "Mudslinger". We tried them all. And they all seemed alcohol-free as they were going down, but when you stood up after a long night, you felt every single one. We took the tube everywhere, and one night, after some intense boozin', three of us, stricken with the call of nature, ran off the train at its nearest stop and headed for the bathroom. We only found one and it was one of those outdoor "pay" bathrooms, and we had not one pound between us. So, since it was a good 4 in the morning on the deserted London streets, we relieved ourselves on the nearest building. As we were all sighing and moaning in relief, I happened to look up. And it was Big Ben. True story.

Before I left, a girl that I was seeing gave me (for Christmas) a "travelers logbook" for my trip. It was your typical journal adorned with prints of old stamps and places for the date and what you've seen. Day by day, I filled it up with useless ramblings, what I saw, what I drank, etc. When I got back she thought I was crazy for actually using it. We "broke up" about a week later. I use these terms loosely because our relationship was treated similarly.... Travelling with us was the chaperone's son, who was a few years older, and had gone on this trip before. In a drunken stupor in our hotel room, he told of his sexual escapades when he was on the trip and was concerned that we were not taking advantage of the situation, "ifyouknowwhatimean." It goes along with this theory of displacement. You take a person out of their element by flying them across the globe and they have the excuse to act like different people with no harm/no foul upon return. Needless to say, some of our group answered his call. I just "slept next" to a girl one night if that counts.

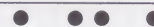
Until new year's. We were on a boat, on the Thames, I suppose. Drunk as skunks of course. As New Years rang in, I took the opportunity to pour an entire beer on the head of one of my friends. Some other chaperone yelled at me and immediately told me to "swab the deck." I don't remember much else, but I do remember NOT doing any swabbing, thank you very much. On the bus ride back to the hotel, spurred on by the moment and the sauce, a girl and I started kissing. Just kissing, and that was it. I remember thinking how cool it was, because it was a girl who I was friends with, but never thought about in "that way." Happy New Year. I would "date" her a few months later for about a week. You see, it's just not the same if you're not in the throws of the British Empire.

I'd have to really dig around for that journal, the people are long since gone from my circle, and I don't plan on ordering another gin & tonic until I'm 55, but I still have The Lemonheads "It's a Shame About Ray". Without it, I probably wouldn't have remembered anything about those last ten days of 1992. And that, my friends, is why I love that album.



# Kill Your Radio #4

Mike Ski of Brother's Keeper  
discusses his top ten favorite records of all time



## Public Enemy "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold us Back"

Anyone surprised by this choice has something wrong with them. This release marks vocalist Chuck D and the group Public Enemy as one of the most inspiring and uplifting forces to date for not only Hip Hop music, but music as a whole. When people talk about bringing back '88, I longingly hope this is what they are talking about. Uncompromising lyrics crush over tense, raw, aggravated beats to create a powerful barrage of angry, fist-in-the-air anthems. Bravely taking on anti-government, anti-corporate topics, as well as race and social related issues, Public Enemy showed the courage to say things no one else would say but wished everyone else would. Attacking the media, the FBI, and the CIA were all in a day's work. "It Takes a Nation of Millions..." is a big fuck you in the face of rock and music critics of the time who condemned PE for their militancy and revolutionary stands when Hip Hop was still young, creating an example of a spirit still unsurpassed to this day. This record stands as a successful blueprint for a now-failed rap and rock music generation still obsessed with girls, drugs, cars, and guns. I pray for someone to pick up the baton... it's right there on the floor, see it?

"I got a letter from the Government the other day. I opened and read it, it said they were suckers." (From "Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos")

## Refused "The Shape of Punk to Come"

Ten years later, the pasty white boys from Sweden turn every head possible by creating this record that indeed, as the title implies, changed everything from that point on. A creative masterpiece in terms of musicianship, composition, and especially lyrical form and content, I could amaze my peers with cool sounding bits of wisdom stolen from the liner notes of this tasty treat from here until Tuesday. A moist collage of tempos, moods, and melodies decorate the album as cellos, pianos, and sampling make frosting without sounding like a bad talent show. Vocalist Dennis Lyxen evidences his knack for vocal molotov cocktails as he yaps his way through tales of the search for liberation and passionate plots for romantic revolution. Possibly one of the best live bands I've ever seen. Maybe subconsciously, however most notably, "The Shape of Punk to Come" makes the often dry politics of revolution appear so damn stylish. Refused are so cool.

"Good words won't cover ugly actions and good frames won't save bad paintings." (From "New Noise")

## Rollins Band "The End of Silence"

From the legendary punk band Black Flag, frontman Henry Rollins destroys everything and everyone as a vocalist, lyricist, not to mention the author of several books that kick ass. There will never be a record as pissed as this ever again. The raw, dense heaviness clashes with amazing production by now famous producer Andy Wallace, and uh, oh... guess what? The band members are amazing musicians! Sshhhh! There are hints of jazz and other influences apparent in an

effortless stranglehold that never loses its intensity. The brilliance of this record is the combination of good music with AMAZING lyrics that are painfully self-aware. Rollins defines dichotomy with a roller-coaster ride of ripping emotion and pure adrenaline with the highest highs and lowest lows allowed without a prescription. Warning: This record will cause you to never trust anyone again, and quite possibly kill someone in the meantime. Check out Rollins' book "Get in the Van" for another reality check into life on the road in a punk rock band.

"I take my fear, my humiliation... I crush it in my fist. I open my hand, I've got a diamond. My diamond is rage. I've got diamonds in my eyes." (From "Just Like You")

## Quicksand "Slip"

Talk about a breath of fresh air, almost all members of the "over 25 club" will attest to the staleness embraced by the hardcore/punk scene just before the release of this album. So embraced, by myself included, that I hated this record when I first heard it. After being dragged kicking and screaming to see them live however, I suddenly understood it. And so did a lot of people, evidenced in the tidal wave of "Quicksandish" bands that would soon follow. Yet, for good reason. Sometimes driving, other times plodding, the mid-tempo riff-raff on "Slip" is creative and distinct. Spacy guitar wahs and sashes top thick, juicy basslines and drums as the perfect foundation for drawn out vocal whines and pleads. Quicksand's "Slip" rides the fence between heavy and emotional without being cheesy or bad rock. Good lyrics aren't too "arty" for the kids or depressing enough to be a suicide soundtrack for the pimply-faced beanpole in the sweater. Amen. A record which bridged the gaps in a starved scene dying for something groundbreaking and creative and is still going....

## Verbal Assault "Trial"

Another '88 band that I wish people wanted to "bring back." Verbal Assault is a band that was and is completely original for their time and remains a huge influence to bands that probably don't even realize it today. Straightforward and aggressive, the collection of songs on "Trial" are driving without going over the top. Awesome guitar work that still holds up today, Verbal Assault drive a metallic punk blend home while taking a few stops to chill out and take a breath. The mixture of talky-singing and screaming vocals make the rawness of "Trial" pleasantly listenable. Another case of good songwriting taking precedence over being overly forceful or annoyingly intense in efforts to be a good band.

"Your attitude hurts more than bombs ever will. It's stupidity that kills." (From "Understand")

## Killing Time "Brightside"

I rode my BMX bike all the way across town to purchase this album on vinyl in 10th Grade, the day this record came out. I remember everything about that day because this



record didn't leave my turntable for that whole year. I still know every word. Why? Because Killing Time was a record for normal dudes, by normal dudes. No art projects. No experiments. Just a definitive, common sense hardcore record with straightforward lyrics and music that never gets old. These guys were pissed and you didn't need to read a book to understand why. Universal topics of life's frustration and heartache that everyone can relate to are attacked and left for dead. Upbeat rhythms with heavy breakdowns and timely harmonics dress it up enough to keep it interesting. All in all... to sum it up, a good "Dude" record. I went to see them once and they canceled because the singer couldn't miss his welding class. That's some serious "man shit." Sorry ladies.

"...And ain't it a shame. When everything you need to know is out on the street. Every lesson to learn carved into concrete." (From "Fools Die")

#### **Corrosion of Conformity "Blind"**

Along with The Crimson Ghost, Black Flag bars, and Circle Jerks "skank man," every 80's punk rockers' staple insignia library included the COC spiked skull. With the early releases of COC's garbled and distorted punk colliding with the more Southern Cowboy rock of recent days, it's hard to imagine a happy medium. Well folks, this record has both liberty-spike and jangling-spur potential and everywhere in between. In the early 90's this record may have been described as "crossover," which I find to be such an unpleasant term in that it misses the brilliance of the effort. With style and grace, COC's metallic collection seems to make the craziest changes and rhythms connect with effortless ease. Well-sung melodious vocals aren't afraid or unequipped to hit that note or scream that heavy part. The drumming is the sickest ever-- try to play air-drums along with this record-- I dare you. In any case... "Blind" is a beautifully ugly journey with sloppy control that comes off with thoughtless calculation by five guys who obviously have nothing better to do than be amazing musicians. Timeless in its construction and execution... this record could have been made this year or 5 years from now and still rule.

"So God bless my soul - I've got total control. And the crosshairs lined up dead in my sight. I'm voting with a bullet." (From "Vote with a Bullet")

#### **Bad Brains "I Against I"**

For practically the entire existence of my own band, we have been compared to Snapcase. Okay, early on I can see it, but after all this time it still confused me. Then it hit me, we don't rip off Snapcase... but both us and Snapcase rip off the same bands! Indeed, the one most ripped off is the Bad Brains. This could be a review of almost any Bad Brains record because they all rule. An expertly executed classic concoction of timing changes, starts, stops and arrangements that would have you using your calculator to figure it out. All pulled off with the greatest of ease and the grace of a swan. A giant guitar avalanche of quick punches

however will later crush the swan. Back and forth between aggression and melody, the Bad Brains make it A-okay to slip a couple boring reggae jams into a collection of fast-paced metallic punk hardcore rasta something something without you even noticing. Another amazing band, given the time and climate of their early existence, creating a totally original blend of music that would remain influential for decades.

"I said who is gonna tell the youth the truth about the drugs, mugs, bugs, and the police thugs. About the rotten stinkin' rackets and the fantasies around the nation. Around the nations. Oh baby, what you gonna do?" (From "I against I")

#### **Gorilla Biscuits "Start Today"**

Despite having a name that I was embarrassed to say, Gorilla Biscuits are responsible for completely adding a new dimension to a scene overwhelmingly dominated by big, mean, angry guys. It was finally considered "cool" to be positive. This record is a fun ride without being corny while it rolls through introspective topics with upbeat tempos. Catchy riffage with hooky melodies are topped by Civ's infamous screechy, prepubescent vocals that set it apart from any record of its time. The strength of plain old good songwriting makes this an undisputed Hardcore classic without even considering the impact it would have for years to come. Also note the only New York hardcore all-star band to NOT get back together or play a reunion show. Thank you guys! Lastly, Walter of Quicksand is the lucky fucker to make two of the records in my top 10, having played guitar on "Start Today." Congrats!

"Things I try don't work out. Other people gripe and shout. That's not positive. I'm not perfect. I'm just Civ." (From "Good Intentions")

#### **Suicidal Tendencies "Join the Army"**

People always ask me why I wear my socks pulled up and I'm surprised they don't know. Suicidal Tendencies took over the punk scene in the early 80's with their own brand of gangbanging skate core. When this record came out, it was called "thrash-core." I'm not sure what that means, but I like it. Powerful messages of individuality ring throughout the record, proof that the band themselves faced the scorn of a scene that had never seen anything like them before. Raw, metallic guitars with Slayer-esque imagery and solos get one pumped and give me false courage enough to attempt a bomb-drop off the art museum steps. Many bruises and scabs later, Suicidal Tendencies, unbeknownst to themselves, created a worldwide style of dress, sound, and attitude from their own daily drag. Bandanas, Dickies, hats with the brims flipped up, and you guessed it... socks pulled up. I'm busted.

"Well I don't care 'bout the clothes you wear. It's the size of your heart, not the length of your hair." (From "Join the Army")



# Kill Your Radio #5

Adam Goren of Atom and his Package discusses his top ten favorite records of all time in no particular order

## Beatles "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band"

I don't really have to explain this one, do I? Hands down, the Beatles are the most important rock band to have existed. The progression and ridiculous amounts of amazingly inventive stuff released in 7(!) years is mind-boggling. It's tough to choose one record from them as my favorite, as "Revolver," "Magical Mystery Tour," "Abbey Road," and the "White Album" are all brilliant.

## Public Image Limited "Flowers of Romance"

This is one of the weirder records that I own. This is Public Image Limited's (John Lydon's post Sex Pistols musical endeavor) third full-length record, and it's a departure from their first two records. Gone is the straight forward-ish rock of the first P.I.L. record, and the dub-ish sounding art rock from "Second Edition" (this record has some of the best recorded bass sounds I've ever heard... check it out...). As opposed to the first two P.I.L. records, "Flowers of Romance" is drum centered. I think there's only one song actually having guitar in it. The songs sound to me like a creepified Lungfish. It's great, groovy (ack... did I just use "groovy"? ) and totally weird. Great.

## Minor Threat Discography

This is a collection of all of Minor Threat's recordings. There is no question that Minor Threat was one of the pivotal bands in shaping modern punk/hardcore. As if playing that role in helping to create a subculture that has affected SO many (you included, probably, if you're reading this magazine) isn't impressive enough, the music that Minor Threat made is untouchable. Every song on this CD is excellent. The songwriting is catchy, but raw and angry, and still holds up 20 years later and is anything but straightforward hardcore.

## Laurie Anderson "Big Science"

Big Science is a full length record that drew from Laurie Anderson's 7 hour performance art piece titled 'United States'. "Big Science" definitely stands on its own as a record though. Musically, "Big Science" is a mixture of synthesized, 'real' instruments, and amazingly smart lyrics. The songs are quirky and poppy. "O, Superman" is a song that revolves around one repeated 'ah' sound that somehow works beautifully. "Example #22" shall make thee dance.

## Dead Kennedys "Plastic Surgery Disasters/In God We Trust"

Like the Beatles records, it's tough for me to choose my favorite Dead Kennedys record. They're all excellent, though I'm not as fond of "Bedtime for Democracy" as I am f the others. The Dead Kennedys not only completely rule lyrically, because of Jello Biafra's smart, pissed off, sarcastic as fuck words which take aim at all sorts of dummies on this planet, but musically as well. They sound like NO other punk band ever. East Bay Ray's treble-y surf-ed out but discordant-ly strange and catchy guitar playing is incredible. Terminal Preppie. Yum.

## Brutal Truth "Need to Control"

For me, if a speedy metal/grindcore record is produced poorly, it's really hard for me to enjoy it because it's hard

to tell what's being played and exactly what's going on. Brutal Truth's "Need to Control" is spectacularly produced. It sounds great, and is an amazing hybrid of jazzy grindcore metal, and straight up punk. It's relentlessly heavy and speedy at the same time. Plus it includes a ripping cover of the Germs' "Media Blitz." After this record, Brutal Truth put out a few records which sounded like generic, crusty Nausea-esque punk, with really lousy production... but god-damn, I think this is the best metal record ever.

## Devo "Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo"

Ahhh... a tough choice, as their second record Duty Now For the Future is also great. This record is more guitar driven than the Whip It era stuff that most are firstly familiar with when thinking about Devo. "Are We Not Men" is quirky, yet anthemic with bizarre sexy lyrics, guitar-laced new wave. The Devo video cassettes are also super fun and weird.

## Pixies "Trompe Le Monde"

The Pixies are one of my favorite rock bands for several reasons. First off, I think they wrote amazingly catchy pop rock songs, but not in an obvious way. That is to say, the Pixies songs are catchy but not in the immediately melodic sense of a top 40 radio pop song. The songs are very memorable. All their records are great, and I think they wrote one of the best songs ever, "Velouria," on "Bossanova." Trompe Le Monde also includes one of the best covers ever (up there with Superchunk's cover of the Magnetic Fields' "100,000 Fireflies"), a cover of the Jesus and Mary Chain's "Head On."

## Pogues "Rum, Sodomy and Lash"

The Pogues played energetic Irish folk punk. I like this record so much because the songs tell such moving stories, whether they relate complete fucked up-ed-ness in "The Sick Bed of Cuchulainn," which is amazing in its way that it can make the listener feel like a drunk lunatic (seriously), or the complete hopelessness in "The Old Main Drag." Shane MacGowan's lyrics and vocals are absolutely perfect for this band.

## Metallica "And Justice for All"

Before Metallica went rock, they were THE technical speed band. The songs on this record change time signatures at the drop of the hat, and convince me that James Hetfield wrote some of the most ridiculously amazing rhythm guitar parts (most notably in the first song, "Blackened.") It's a very strangely produced record. The bass is non-existent, and the guitar is incredibly full sounding, while the drums, in standard Metallica fashion sound completely horrible, but it works.... very very well, I might add.

## Honorable Mentions:

**Pavement** "Watery Domestic" EP

**Aphex Twin** "Ambient Works Vol. 2"

**Pink Floyd** "The Wall"

**Queesryche** "Operation Mindcrime"



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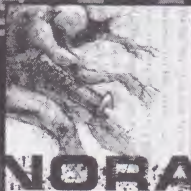
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*L'homme robotik*



# Strike Anywhere

by Ross







grandiose and arrogant statements proclaiming him to be something he is not. Could this be a sign of, gasp!, a mature person? Quite possibly. Check it out for yourself.

*[Continuing a previous discussion on the state of fashion within punk rock...]*

If you look back to the question of fashion stereotypes and people trying to look like the popular styles of the music they listen to, I think that's very much fading away. What very much used to be warring fashion—where everyone looked different in every different subsection of punk—isn't as much so anymore, I think.

**That's interesting because I tend to think everyone looks the same these days. Everyone has the black Dickies and the spock rock haircuts.**

Yeah, I agree. Once the lines were drawn along the lines of what city are you from and what scene do you most readily fit, now you can't tell by looking at a person what they like. You can be pretty sure that that kid with the Buddy Holly glasses doesn't like street punk, but he could like anything else.

**Is that a good thing or a bad thing? Either?**

I don't know if it matters. I think that fashion has just burned through punk rock in the most general sense. The way that punk rock was in the '80s, the way the average kid at the mall or at the show that night is very different they would look now. They are probably into the same battery of music, from the more abstract, heavier stuff to the more melodic stuff, but the lines are definitely blurry at this point. I don't know. It is sad when a fashion gets removed from the context in which it was created. With all of the glamour and the passion and the urgency in the moment until it gets diluted to the world of whoever, whenever, and wherever. It's cool when you go to different cities and people have their own styles. I think that's pretty important.

**Yeah, punk rock fashion is so pervasive these days that it's affected the mainstream as well—from bone-head new metal band that look like they are in a skate-video circa 1994 to N'Sync who look not that different from some of the less hip SoCal bands around that era too.**

You're right, mainstream fashion in music doesn't look all that different from what was considered avant garde not too long ago. Look at those bands in magazines with their tribal tattoos, piercings, spiky hair, and Vans sneakers and they really are doing the same thing that punk kids were doing ten years ago. The funny part, or the sad part I should say, is that those bands, like Limp Bizkit, are the guys in high school who would beat up all the people who dressed the same way they do now. I started going to shows in 1987, I'm twenty-eight, and there was a very patriotic skinhead gang here back then and looking back those guys could be on the cover of Rolling Stone if they had a band today. (laughter)

**It reminds me of this woman that cut my hair when I was like 14. I would come into her store with my Black Flag shirt on thinking I was cool and tough. So she told me that in the early '80s she dated Mike Muir of the Suicidal Tendencies. She said that all he drank was milk and that he used to punch people while holding her hand. Sometimes she would get dragged into a brawl because he was still holding onto her.**

Wow. That is so cool. Imagine the violence of that scene back then. It must have been so scary and so exciting. But, if that's what people are saying about the roots of punk twenty years later, perhaps they'll say similar stuff about 2001 punk rock twenty years from now. Images get skewed. Not to mention we're probably overlooking a generous portion of punk rock in this conversation.

**Here's the first question: Thomas, would you describe yourself and your bandmates as revolutionaries?**

Hm, I can't speak for the rest of my band, although they'd probably feel similarly, but I think that word would put me in a box because that word has been narrowed down a whole lot these days.

**What does that word mean these days?**

Revolutionary can describe ideals and art. I don't know if people these days can be described

I hate to simply rehash didactic publicist statements, but Strike Anywhere is a band that makes me remember the vitality I once saw in punk. That's not to say I don't find punk vital anymore, obviously I do or we wouldn't be here right now. But, I remember the excitement and energy I felt at my first years in the punk scene. I lost that feeling for a while, but when I listen to Strike Anywhere I remember how excited I got to buy a record or go to a show or sew a patch onto my sweatshirt. Times change, people grow up, and the music and culture they once held dear loses its poignancy. That is why it makes me so happy to interview a band like Strike Anywhere. Their music is fast, catchy as hell, crude, and embodies everything I love about punk rock. One should take note that the band is from Richmond, VA, a town with a rich history of punk music mixed with working class rebellion. Recently, I spoke to Thomas--former singer of the incredibly underrated Richmond powerhouse, Inquisition-- about his band and their views on where they stand in the contemporary American punk rock scene. When some bands tell me that their band is "this" or "that" or that they do "this" or "that" better or more interestingly than other bands, you have to take it with a grain of salt. Not so with Thomas. Not only does he believe in music and punk rock more than most people in the scene, but he is so committed to what he believes in that he avoids





that, and beyond that we try to represent the underground and represent ourselves more than a single cause. But, our band isn't built to be that. We are much more of a traditional band in the musical sense than a soapbox set to guitars.

**Are you saying that there's no set of over-arching ideology or politic that comes with Strike Anywhere?**

Yeah, we definitely have a radical bent to everything we write about and everything we feel—especially in our music. What we write about are the things that are closest to our heart; the things that enrage us. Maybe the INC they do too. Of course, we hope to travel and reach people in our travels. Maybe I'm just scared. Maybe I need to have the courage to take back a word like revolutionary. Like words like feminism, for example. Feminists are trying to take back that word from all the negative connotations therein. Maybe I'm just scared to try and take back revolutionary for fear of seeming vain or arrogant.

**Well, let's take it back. Let's take the word in its most literal sense: overhauling the system. Do you want to overhaul the system?**

Yes, absolutely.

**Do you think it is possible for a musician, especially a punk musician these days, to overhaul the system?**

I think that's a great question. Not as much with the minutia of academic politics. That's certainly not our forum, and I don't know how effectual that has been in punk. But, I do think that a sense of consciousness which blends the emotional and personal with what you read is very important. Combining the academic revolutionaries with personal politics is key to changing the system, I think. Trying to make it more applicable—taking it to a more transcendent point—is also important. We can't have the rhetoric of change be such that only highly educated and highly trained people can create or understand it. We need to bring it to a more base level such that everyone is involved in the changing process, and I guess that's where we as a band fit in. You have to connect punk and punk rock politics to people who are not punk, I think.

**I see what you're saying. But, I remember the first few punk rock shows I went to. I went to Gilman Street in Berkeley and it was probably like NOFX or Rancid or something like that that wasn't scary at all, but I was so fucking scared. I thought it was the craziest thing I had ever seen. I guess, what I'm saying is that I wonder if punk is as vital these days as it was when I first got into it. Maybe it's because I've grown up and seen more stuff—**

**Not to mention, I've been to countless punk shows—but it really doesn't seem as threatening these days, and I think without the constant threat that punk rock has at its core then it's really not that significant at all.**

that way, or at least I don't know if I can. People can do things that are revolutionary: people can be part of an ideal or a specific time and place that can be described as revolutionary times. I'm not sure if people themselves these days can be revolutionaries. I don't know if the word is too big—in that it implies too much—or whether people are too big. Probably both somehow.

**Are people too small for the word?**

I'm not sure. I think the word has gotten too big for people, yes. I think revolutionary used to mean all sorts of shock value art tactics. I think before this era of unmediated hyper information where people can wear something and be revolutionaries or paint a picture and describe it as revolutionary art. The word probably doesn't mean as much. The problem is that it's so easy to label something that way, but then really revolution is only as big as its results. If the painting or the song or the ideal doesn't lead to any change then its revolutionary nature is lost and it isn't vital anymore. I think music can be a part of something bigger, but in itself no. And musicians? No!

**Really? That's fascinating considering your lyrics.**

Well, I definitely have ideals and I have a lot of passion for things I see in the community and the things that get all five of us as a band motivated. But, I think calling yourself revolutionary puts you on a pedestal that is not human anymore. **For this issue I just interviewed the (International) Noise Conspiracy, and I bet if you asked them they would say, without even blinking an eye, "Yes, we're revolutionaries."**

Sure, that's their whole concept. They're conceptual art is about being a band of revolutionaries. We're not. We write about things that move us. We believe that punk and hardcore at its core is revolutionary and we want to be there for

I see exactly what you're saying. It's not threatening anymore and it's very accessible these days. I mean, when I first got into punk you didn't have anything in the mainstream at all that would lead kids to find out about the sub-MTV level. Nowadays, where N'Sync and Limp Bizkit look like punks, and then there are bands who were in the punk scene like Blink 182 in the mainstream, it is so much easier for a kid to check out a show and fit right in with no problems. Of course this isn't a bad thing, because hopefully that kid will learn what he or she finds to be special about punk that the mainstream is devoid of. But, it just isn't scary anymore. It's very undangerous. You can walk down the street or go to the mall and see a random punk kid. Maybe even adults or jock kids look punk and listen to punk. I went to my old neighborhood the other day where I grew up and I saw this kid with green hair go by on a skateboard. I asked him if he was into punk and he told me he was. I told him about my band and that we had a show that night and that he should come. He looked at me like he was in shock.

**There's punk these days?**

He was so surprised to hear that there was a punk scene right in his backyard of Richmond. I asked him if he liked Avail or Ann Beretta, and I was amazed to hear that he had never heard of either of those bands. What punk kid hasn't heard of Avail? He told me he liked Green Day and Blink 182. So, I told him about the show and I realized I was doing the same thing that someone did to me when I first got into punk. It's like, some strange guy with weird hair comes up to you and tells you about this alternate culture across town. For him it probably would have been the most shocking thing in the world, just like when you saw NOFX or me when I saw Gwar. (laughter) Of





Maybe I'm just scared. Maybe I need to have the courage to take back a word like revolutionary. Like words like feminism, for example. Feminists are trying to take back that word from all the negative connotations therein. Maybe I'm just scared to try and take back revolutionary for fear of seeming vain or arrogant.



course, that wasn't my first punk show but Gwar was doubly insane. (much laughter) Anyways, it's kids like that that make me have hope for punk. There are still kids to touch, there are still kids to shock.

**What you're saying is that the underground will always be underground and the mainstream will always be the mainstream.**

Right. I guess that words like revolutionary or sell-out need to be redefined or even shelved for a little while. Those words don't mean anything anymore. If it has to be a subculture and not a counter culture, if it is already too late, if it comes to the point where the kid with the green hair and the skateboard doesn't even know it exists, then it may be too late. But, I don't think it is too late. I think that the only option is to make the connections between music and ideology more vital, more thoughtful, and more extreme even. There's other things to do with punk and not have it just analyze itself over and over again. Let's solve the problems it poses, not just sing about the same things over and over again.

**In the song you have, "Notes on Pulling Down the Sky," you talk about this "New Age." I've also seen you mention it in a few interviews. So I wrote down a few questions based on it. Here they are: what is this new age, what is the old age, why is the new age new, and what characterizes it as different from a new age? Chew on that, Thomas.**

That's a sweet question. The problem with writing lyrics that sound good and lofty and important is that people scrutinize them. (laughter) Um, I don't think I mean new age in a firmly idealistic way. I think I meant it more in an ironic way. The same problems are here as in the old age, and I guess that's my way of saying we need to have a new potential to organize in this digital world. There is a great chance for the powers that be

to influence us and distort facts to make people think what may not be so. I think with my new age philosophy I'm making a statement about having solidarity and organizing so that we don't let the potential for corruption overwhelm us. The new age versus the old age can be seen in the world of media: it's all around us now more than ever before. Especially in communication which has drastically changed over the past few years. As I said, there's the potential to use it to educate and organize and democratize, and there's the potential to have it used against us.

**It seems to me that you're talking about a watershed. Your music doesn't tell me, I think, to run into the streets and tear down the capital building and change the system now, but rather to change ourselves. Then gradually change what's around us based on how it affects us.**

Yeah, but I don't want to leave behind the old. There's no slash and burn about it, we're not trying to level everything before this. We're trying to find the good in what we may be leaving behind. I want to cut the wasted time away and change perspectives based on what's inside ourselves. There's a lot of sadness and misery and changing the world is fucking intimidating. We want to face ourselves and maybe even our scene and try to influence others based on that. So, no abandoning here... just redefining. Is that a good answer?

**Yes, most definitely.**

Don't get me wrong, I want there to be those bands to talk about revolution right now. Like the bands that talk about taking to the streets today.

**Like Bikini Kill, INC, Propagandhi, Born Against, ect.**

Right. I definitely want bands like Downcast to go out there and talk about burning down the White House. I find that impulse to be more than vital. But, I want people to not just live off the rage of their own expression. I don't want people to recycle. I want people to create and think. I want art

and culture to change, but I am realistic and I realize it takes time. We have song after song about that impulse to burn down the White House. Maybe we're trying to make the things vibrant and make people realize it's still alive. I think every band is doing that these days, though.

**No Thomas, you're wrong and that's why I fucking love your band, because no one is doing it. No one is acknowledging revolution in the same way you are. You guys are talking about taking the personal to the political. Every other band either talks about one or the other, or at least taking the political to the personal. I love Bikini Kill and I love Refused, but I want there to be more bands like yours out there. I want a return to the '80s and the '70s where you had bands like Dead Kennedys to Crass to Gang of Four, not just bands that spit out the same power chords over screamy vocals lining the record store shelves.**

Wow, that's the best compliment I've ever gotten about my music. I agree, and that's what makes bands like Bikini Kill and Refused so vital, is that they were doing something different and creative and redefining. But, the bands you just listed—the Dead Kennedys, Crass, and Gang of Four, those bands are about as different as you can get and they all had the same kids listening to them. I think that is what makes punk great. I think that's what makes punk strong and more vibrant than the mainstream will ever be.

**Photos by Tim Owens**







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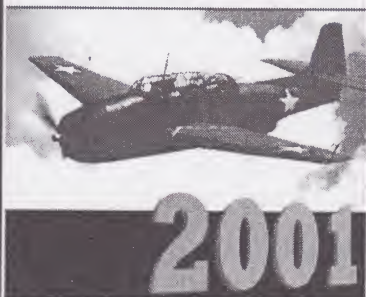
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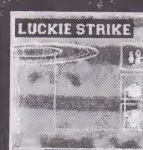
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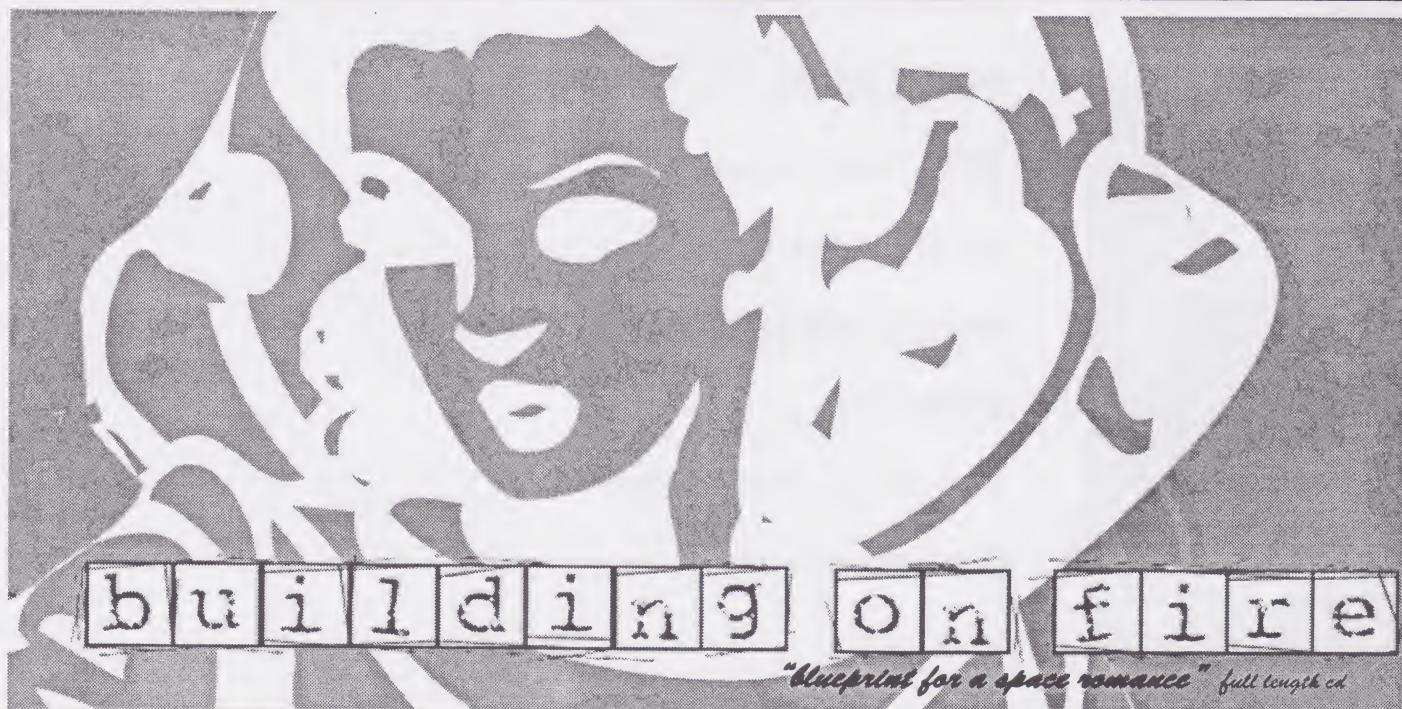


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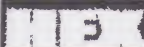
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# THE STORY

by Megan Callow

One Saturday morning Sarah went with Kevin to see an apartment. Kevin needed to find a place to live. They arrived, parked, and Sarah waited in the car.

"I'm taking the keys," Kevin told her.

"No, leave them." So she could listen to music, or walk around if she wanted to.

He paused and looked at the ignition.

"I can't," he said. "I'll tell you why when I get back."

"Oh. Ok." Nobody likes to be stuck in a car with no keys. What if she had to go to the bathroom? Oh well, she could work on her letter to her mother.

He came back and they went to a coffee shop. She drank tea and he ate poached eggs.

"Tell me a story," she said when it was silent. He looked at her with his mouth full of eggs and toast. She noticed that his eyelashes were so long it almost looked like he was wearing makeup.

"Oh," she said. "Ok, I'll tell you a story, since I'm not eating. Um." She realized she could think of nothing to tell. Maybe it was because it was one of their first dates, maybe she really had nothing to say, God forbid. He looked at her, chewing, and blinked. She saw a bus go by outside.

"I threw up on the bus once. I was on my way home from my friend's house. I was so hungover and I got really carsick so I threw up."

He looked moderately amused and a little bit grossed out. "I probably shouldn't tell stories about vomiting when someone is trying to eat his breakfast," Sarah thought.

"Um, my dad is buying a new car. A Mercedes station wagon."

"Hm," he said.

"God, that was even worse than the last one, huh."

"No, it was okay."

They were in the car again, driving down Telegraph. It was a beautiful day, and Sarah looked out the window and thought about how it felt like summer and how she wished it were summer. She wanted to tell him this, or at least to say something remotely interesting, when he started talking.

"Once, when I was fourteen," he began, "I wanted to be a superhero. My mom and I were out running errands one day and she wanted to go to Macy's for cosmetics or something so of course I decided to wait in the car. I was sitting there, rocking out to whatever music I was listening to in those days. Probably Kiss, or something corny and great like that. I remember thinking about being a superhero; saving the world from evil, and all that. I remember thinking about what a bad ass I would be if any one ever tried to give me or my mom or my sister trouble. I would kick their ass, I thought.

"I saw some guys hanging out across the parking lot. Big, tough guys, just standing around, looking like assholes. I would beat them up if they gave me any shit. I almost wanted them to, so I could prove myself. I got so wrapped up in this fantasy, practicing my don't-fuck-with-me look in the rear-view mirror, when I looked over, they were gone. I didn't even see where they went.

"Then all of a sudden a huge arm reached in the car window and grabbed me.

"Get the fuck out of the car," he said.

"Fuck you," I managed to tell them, although I didn't sound anywhere near as tough as I did in my fantasies. In fact, I'm sure I sounded a lot like the puny, scared-shitless little kid that I was.

"Get the FUCK out of the car before I pull you out the window," he told me.

"I got the fuck out.

"Then they jumped in and they stole it. That's why I never leave my keys in the car. It's not that I don't trust you; if it happened once, it can happen again."



# Unitas *by Jonah*

"We're not what you would expect when you do the Discount plus Hot Water Music math," Unitas singer Jason Rockhill says during this interview, and he's right. Unitas are more akin to the Southern twang of Son Volt and Uncle Tupelo than the hard-driving punk rock that put Gainesville on the map. Composed of ex-Discount drummer Bill Nesper, Hot Water Music bassist Jason Black, and the brotherly duo of Jason (vocals) and Todd Rockhill (guitarist), Unitas have collectively spat in the face of every popular trend in the punk community by playing music for themselves instead of limping by on the predictable ex-member crutch. On their debut album "Porch Life," the band categorically lists where they "lifted" the words and concepts from their songs: obvious luminaries like Jeff Tweedy (Wilco), aside REM, Chisel, and most ominously, "that guy from Error Type:11." What started as way to pass the time between tours has taken a more serious turn since Discount broke up last year; while HWM was recently on a short hiatus, Unitas hit the road for a quick jaunt across the U.S. But no matter how serious Unitas gets, they'll always be a little rough around the edges. Jason Rockhill's coarse vocals aren't always in tune, and it wouldn't be surprising if all the music on this album was recorded in one take. But that's part of the band's charm; in the face of polished Blink 182 clones and derivative whining about girls, Unitas are content to sit back on the porch and inquire: "What's your favorite Uncle Tupelo song?" between swigs of cheap beer. So how exactly is "Porch Life" a punk rock record? The band collectively responds in the liner notes, "If you don't know I'm not telling." Good answer guys, neither am I.

## **What happened with Discount?**

**Bill:** Well, we stopped being a band; that's the whole story. We didn't want to stop being friends, but we did want to do different things with our music. We grew up in Discount and then we just grew apart. It was so important and it still is to all of us: just not enough to do it anymore.

## **What's Porch Life?**

**Jason R:** We've got a really great porch at the house we've lived at for the last few years. We spend a whole lot of time out there when the weather's nice. Throughout the writing and recording of this record we were out there constantly; it became the place where you retreat when something happens and where you form your perspective on what those events mean. Everything from the conversation about what are we doing that night, to helping someone through whatever shit was going on with them. I was worried about calling the album "Porch Life" because it can be misinterpreted as, "We're so lazy all we do is sit around on the porch and waste our lives away." It's more about valuing your free time.

## **Bill, Were you still working on Unitas stuff while you were in Discount?**

**Bill:** Yeah, Unitas started on the down time between the last few Discount tours. It was really funny because the group of friends who were always together decided to become a band instead of continuing to talk about the sad state of music. We all wanted to play music, have fun, and not be full of crap. And it's worked. All smiles, from the first practice on.

## **Is a band like Unitas something that you've always wanted to do?**

**Bill:** I've always been doing this in some way. Musically, Unitas is something I never expected; I never thought that it would have come so naturally. It's really great to be able to play whatever you want and not limit yourself as a band to a certain genre. There is a lot of freedom with Unitas; we've all done this a few times and know what we want to say.

## **I was a little confused by your liner notes. Is the pretty boy you're picking a fight with in "Unitas (Picks a Fight)" directed towards Artie from Errortype:11? Do you think that you could beat him in a fight?**

**Jason R:** I've always thought that the underground media needed to instigate more fighting between bands. I've spent the better part of the last five years on tour and "Unitas (Picks a Fight Song)" is about having to sit through some of the worst bands on the planet on a nightly basis. There's a story about Artie from Errortype:11 saying something like "I want that 45 minutes of my life back" during the set of some band that had played before them. That quote became a running thing amongst us all. I've always been unsure about what I felt about Errortype:11, and then for some reason I saw them play like 4 times in a month and before this certain song at every show he would scream into the microphone "THIS SONG IS ABOUT FUCKING!" All of a sudden, Artie had become the butt of his own joke to me. I know that people's words can come back to haunt them and I'm completely aware that this can all be turned against me someday as well. But in the end, the song is kind of a joke about wanting to go out and aggressively collect all of that time and hearing that I've lost over the years. I originally wanted to call the song "The Unitas Collection Agency Comes Knocking At Your Door."

## **Do people tend to be surprised by Unitas, considering it has members of Hot Water Music and Discount? I'm sure a lot of people were expecting something more along the lines of those bands. How have the reactions been?**

**Jason R:** It's hard to judge that from where I'm sitting. The response has been resoundingly positive, especially in the few reviews I've read so far. On the tour we did there seemed to be a mixture of "I have no idea what to make of that" and "That's not at all what I was expecting but it was really cool." I haven't heard anything negative yet, but the people who storm out of your show don't always tell you that they were disappointed. I really like the fact that we're not what you would expect when you do the Discount plus Hot Water Music math. But we do realize that it's a big leap for a lot of people. We're going to let the record filter out there a little more before we do anymore extended trips for shows. We're definitely something that might take people a couple listens before they get it.

## **Is it frustrating to try to keep the band going when the other Jason (Black, bassist) is so busy with Hot Water Music?**

I'm HWM's tour manager too, so half the band is on tour a lot of the time. Bill and Todd are finishing up school for the next few months so it's not really a big issue just yet. I really wish we could be more active; we all believe in the band. It's a shame that we have the restrictions, but it just means that we have to be smarter about how we plan things. We're going to come up with a way to make it work.

**"I've always thought that the underground  
more fighting b**



In your liner notes you say that the punk scene is lacking in what you refer to as "guts or passion." How is Unitas different? Is this just a Florida thang?

**Jason R:** It has nothing to do with Florida, most bands don't even come here. I'm bored by a lot of the stuff that's going on right now. It seems like everyone is working from the same source material. It's the same five bands influencing everything. There are too many bands, and too many labels, and everyone's got a record deal, and everyone's on tour, and everyone's hyping everything, and everyone's got a booking agent on their first tour, and everyone feels entitled to the fucking world. But they all sound the same, and they dress the same, and they're 22 and they're already covered with tattoos. Everything is a fourth generation copy of a copy-- you can see it in a band's performance. So I find myself retreating into my X records, and into the Replacements, and Nick Cave, and Elvis Costello, and the Byrds. But Unitas is just a band. I would never claim that we're completely original. I did footnote the lyrics I stole on the record --we're not trying to hide that from anyone. We are only the sum of whatever influenced us and we completely wear them on our sleeves. But goddamnit I love that shit and I'm trying to at least do some justice to the things I love. And if at the end of the day if this band is completely ignored that's all right with me. All I want is an honest reaction. Ok, I just stole that last line from Bob Mould.

**It seems like you are very frustrated by the scene. What has kept you in it for so long? Do you ever think about giving up?**

**Jason R:** I'm completely frustrated with bands, I don't care about the scene. But no matter what show I go to there will be at least one moment that reminds me of why I'm there. Sometimes that moment lasts for the entire show and sometimes just for a second. It's those moments that keep me coming back, whether it's a CD that got played between bands, or a really great band, or a song, or a chorus, or between song banter, or meeting new people, or seeing people I haven't seen in a long time. This is what I do and I've accepted the fact that there's going to be a whole lot of bad to go along with the seemingly small amounts of good. The other day, Jason Black and I were talking about how we had already picked which team we were on. We're both lifers.

**Who do you like better, Wilco or Son Volt?**

**Jason R:** In the band versus argument I have to go with Son Volt. Some of my favorite Uncle Tupelo songs are Jeff Tweedy songs, but Wilco isn't as solid as Son Volt. I'm of the opinion that Wilco's best work is on the Billy Bragg & Wilco records. If we want to take up the rest of the afternoon we could take this into a song by song comparison and Wilco will win a few of those battles.

**Do you think that one of the problems in the scene is that kids don't really listen to anything outside of the punk genre?**

**Jason R:** I don't think it's that people don't listen to stuff outside the punk genre, it's that they don't listen to stuff more than a few years old. I still find it hard to believe that no one called the Promise Ring out on the fact that most of the songs on their first 2 records ARE Wedding Present songs. Right now everyone's saying that everything in the world sounds like Weezer. But Weezer are a couple Pixes songs on repeat. I think it has to do with the fact that there's so much turn over in the punk rock scene. It's a transitional phase for a lot of people on their way to a family and a mortgage or in the case of Gainesville right now, a serious drug habit. It's hard to expect people who are just passing through to have an expansive perspective on past, present and future. **Have you always listened to classic rock and alt-country stuff? Was it hard to find other people in the punk scene that had the same taste in music?**

**Jason R:** When you grow up in Florida, you're in contact with classic rock and country music from all directions. The stuff that gets labeled alt-country right now just sounds like Neil Young, Tom Petty, and the Eagles to me anyway; it's all the same thing. We didn't put up ads in record stores to put this band together, we've known each other for years. We just sort of looked around at each other and said, "Hey I'm bored, want to start another band?" Todd started cranking out these big southern rock riffs and it went from there. **I'm under the impression that "Last One out of Gainesville is a Rotten Egg," is a cut at the As Friends Rust song "Half-Friend Town." Do you have a vendetta against them aside from the fact that they directly stole the song's opening riff from a Hot Water Music song?**

**Jason R:** The song isn't entirely about that "Half Friend Town" song. I think the As Friends Rust song and our song could easily be about any town in the world. Everyone complains about the town they live in, especially when it's a small one, and Gainesville's no different. But it does get to the point where you're just tired of hearing people complain. "Rotten Egg" is basically a dare to stop complaining and move to some other town where you'll eventually fall into the same problems once the new-ness of it wears off. I referenced the AFR song because it's the most current blatantly anti-Gainesville song. I don't understand the idea of damning an entire town for something that you're just as guilty of. There's a Bluetip song on their last record with the line "If you've got no friends then maybe you're not friendly." That communicates the idea so well that I guess I should have just stolen those lyrics too. But the whole song isn't about the AFR song, only that "while you're calculating..." line. There's no official vendetta but there might be some division.

**Okay, so what's the best kind of beer to drink on the porch?**

**Jason R:** As the non-drinker in the band I will be passing on this question. The convenience store on the corner just got a Frozen Coke machine; I'm way into those right now.

**Bill:** Usually the cold, cheap kind.

**Photos by Karen Hodges**



ground media needed to instigate  
between bands."



# Adam Lindenberg

## A Different Dose

The world is not as it should be. Not only regarding the newsworthy issues making the front page, but illogical and disorganized interactions among human beings on an interpersonal scale.

There are problems, big problems in fact, that have been known to ignite a soul. We worry. We learn about the root causes, and take one of three paths: 1) Ignore them because they are monstrous problems and we console ourselves, "That's just the way it is"; 2) Get off our asses and put our spirit and concern to good cause; or, 3) Drop the leftover coins from our chicken gyro we had for lunch into a bucket with an uncertain, yet hopeful destination at its bottom.

These big problems are there for a reason, and often possess some discernable positive counterpart. For example, the ozone problem grants us an ultra-convenient applied mask for our natural scents. And, the energy crisis we face imports a nice IRS gift into our checkbooks courtesy of President Bush's eagerness to eradicate the caribou of Alaska for their measly six-month oil supply.

There are other situations a generation may face, not quite qualifying for the problem column. They aren't even a concern, mainly because of their triviality. Life would undoubtedly be a smidge sweeter with some attention paid to them. Call this the test run to fine tune my upcoming Associated Press release. I would like to be your leader on these troubling issues, if you'll have me.

The prime example presents itself in the form of the public laundromat dryer, specifically right after someone has been using it. I'm not sure exactly what causes all that stuff to collect in the dryer filter, but I'm in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of whatever it takes. I have been victimized by the beastly, but even the most pristine create that unsightly fuzz to a degree. The point is, no matter how much extraneous matter is attached to your clothing, it is so much better to handle your own. So, if we all mobilized, everyone would remove their own lint rather than that of the 250-pound guy with a new gym membership. And as I selfishly convince myself only 75% of you are dismissing this for its triviality right now, you would all appreciate the benefit. The reasons are simple: 1) Laundry sucks, and 2) Your lazy ass wants to get it over with once that machine stops spinning. I do not want to be the sucker clearing the lint trap before and after my turn anymore. Help me.

Here's a cause that is a little more worthy of our attention, even grounds for a slightly successful and hip how-to book: cell phone protocol. You have one and so do I—no shame.\* Not to be confused with cell phone etiquette, for we all know not to use it at restaurants and on the commuter train. I am referring to protocol in dealing with the highly imperfect service we pay for. You know they'll never improve it to the point of your call never cutting off, because they make so much money on the callback. I believe a basic roadmap will plant seeds of wildflowers in your brain.

### **Ground Line – Cell Phone**

A basic problem we've all faced. You're on your home phone with a friend's cell in a slight disagreement, you reach 75% resolution of your problem, and the service quits. Who calls who back? Do you rely on who's more of an avid phone user in general? Who called who in the first place? What if service already quit once? Does that establish a precedent, or should you reciprocate to even out the pricing? Does price factor into the equation, since cell phone calls can still theoretically cost up to 60 cents per minute? Or are we, as a society, totally past the cost factors of cell phones?

Most people I have surveyed have initially thought the ground line caller should call back in most instances to preserve any free minutes or reduce cell phone bill of the other talker. I wholeheartedly disagree, and not just because the cell phone companies fuck you on the incoming calls in the United States. Only the cell phone user knows when his or her reception has improved to the point of redialing, and hence, minimizing the chance of another disconnection. The only exception I can think of is if the call is so close to being over, but a "good-bye" must be said. The ground line caller may call back expecting voice mail for the cell phone user to check when he or she gets in a good zone.

### **Cell Phone – Cell Phone**

Tricky, but now that the callers are on similar shaky ground, the solution ironically becomes easier. I say that reciprocity becomes the standard to follow. So, if you make the initial call and service quits, you should expect the call back. Similarly, if service has already quit once, the person who made the first callback should expect to be called. Even if you discover that it is your reception that caused the breakup, it doesn't matter because the other person has no way to pinpoint the root cause of the separation. Price goes entirely out the window, because no one can be expected to know whether or not one person is on a long distance plan, or is low on free minutes for the month.

### **Getting Tricky**

There are unlimited permutations of this problem; many feature intricate detail to help complicate this already tangled web. Business calls should factor the hierarchy of the two parties on the phone in some fashion, that the subservient or help-seeking party should always make the callback.\*\* What if one party just knows the answer to the question at hand, say directions to a meeting place? The knowledgeable party should always make the call, for the worst case scenario is the information can be placed on voicemail at the convenience of the party in need of guidance.

### **Issues Currently Being Resolved**

I am all for driving safety and cell phones, and as the positive legislation requiring hands-free devices seeps throughout our land, our little policy should plan ahead. If it is known that one party is driving, that person should *not* be the one to call back. Surprised? Here's the rationale. You might say that the driver would be the one to best analyze road conditions, and dial the number when all is clear. Ce n'est pas vrai. If the two parties have been talking already, that means the phone is already connected to the hands-free device. Meaning, the driver needs to remove the phone, dial the number, then reattach. Now isn't it simpler and safer just to have the driver press any button to answer the call without any complicated dialing or handling?

The list is endless, and like the snow that falls, no two cell phone circumstances are alike. Let's deal with them together. Follow humbly and watch telephone callback anxiety disappear, avoid potentially damaging miscommunications with your friends, and even notice a reduced cell phone bill at the end of the month. Of course, I realize this problem ranks somewhere above the dryer lint and below most everything else humanely imaginable. However, consider that we have complex matrices about how to use urinal properly in the company of other men. We've also created and identified the different standards of how much and who is a proper recipient of a tip in every country around the world. Maybe cell phone etiquette is not that trivial after all, considering we are swarmed with more cellular connections every day and the reception will perpetually suck.

\*Without trying to frighten the readership, save Joey Spitzfire, every LOI columnist I know currently uses a cell phone.

\*\*Does not apply to Ross and me.



# very worthy:



## Kolya LP/CD:

This Boston trio has perfected their blend of dissonance and melody, introspection and anger. Energetic and innovative post-punk.



## Proudentall 'What's Happening Here' CD

Midwestern rock pioneers who continue to forge the trail where Boys Life and Giants Chair left off. From subtle sonic textures, to full aural assault. Re-released in tandem with SUN SEA SKY PRODUCTIONS

**Soon:** Her Flyaway Manner/Haymarket Riot 7"  
Her Flyaway Manner 'A rotation of thoughts and themes' CDEP

**Also:** Her Flyaway Manner, m.i.j., Christie Front Drive, Mineral, Broken Hearts Are Blue, Traluma and more.

**caulfield records** [caulfieldrecords.com](http://caulfieldrecords.com) ~ [info@caulfieldrecords.com](mailto:info@caulfieldrecords.com) ~ pob 84323 Lincoln NE 68502 ~ Distributed by Lumberjack

## :BOILERMAKER

L e u c a d i a

Often described as one of the most under-rated groups in indie rock, Boilermaker returns with a 17 track release featuring 5 songs hand picked from their earlier releases plus two new songs as a taste of what's to come.



**IN STORES:**  
september 2001

## :REUBEN'S ACCOMPLICE

I b l a m e t h e s c e n e r y

Finally, the debut release. "Reuben's accomplice packs an emotional punch that's more yearning than yelling, with hooks and harmonies undercut by unique chord voicings and an insistent rhythm section." *Phoenix New Times*



**IN STORES:**  
september 2001

## :IDES OF SPACE

There are no new clouds

"For a band that plays with the lush, dreamy precision of [Australia's] Ides of Space, it comes as something of a surprise to learn that beneath their gossamer surface there lurks a snarling rock beast...sort of..." -*Rave Magazine*. Recorded by Wayne Connolly (Underground Lovers, You Am I, Noise Addict).



**IN STORES:**  
october 2001

**ALSO AVAILABLE:** The Jealous Sound, The And/Ors, The Good Life, Songs for Cassavetes





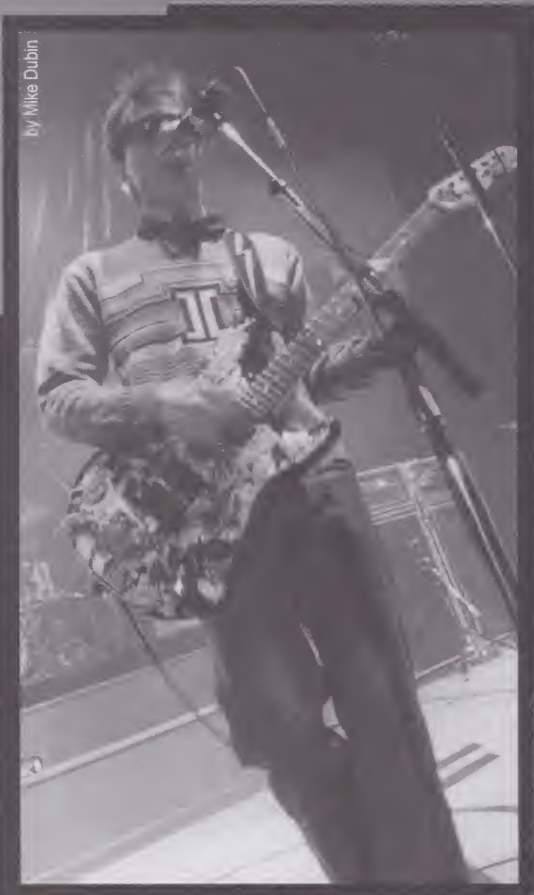
**Gameface**



**Alkaline Trio**



by Mike Dubin



**Weezer**

by Ross Siegel



**Cave-in**



# Fugazi

by David Pujol



# Dillinger 4

by Ross Siegel



by Ross Siegel

# Hey Mercedes



by Ross Siegel

# Murder City Devils



# CD Sampler Listing

- 8) **De La Hoya**: "Raphael Nonsenso" from "DANCE! Techno Mega-Mix Vol. 42" CD (Red Leader: [www.redleaderrecords.com](http://www.redleaderrecords.com))
- 1) **Angels in the Architecture**: "Blue Line" from "The Distance in Writing" CD (Law of Inertia: [www.lawofinertia.com](http://www.lawofinertia.com))
- 17) **Glasseater**: "Second Door to the Right" from "7 Years Bad Luck" CD (Fearless: [www.fearlessrecords.com](http://www.fearlessrecords.com))
- 2) **The Fairlanes**: "This Amp Goes to 11" from "Welcome to Nowhere" CD (Suburban Home: [www.suburbanhomerecords.com](http://www.suburbanhomerecords.com))
- 23) **The White Octave**: "The Constant is Zero" from "Menergy" CD (Initial: [www.initialrecords.com](http://www.initialrecords.com))
- 25) **Counterfit**: "From Finish to Starting Line" from "From Finish to Starting Line" EP (Negative Progression: [www.negativeprogression.com](http://www.negativeprogression.com))
- 12) **Fall Silent**: "Playing House" from "7 Years in the Desert" CD (Revelation: [www.revhq.com](http://www.revhq.com))
- 14) **The Reunion Show**: "Art of Nothing" from "The Motion" MCD (Law of Inertia [out in January 2002: [www.lawofinertia.com](http://www.lawofinertia.com)])
- 7) **Malefaction**: "I Will Not Serve" from "Crush and Dream" CD (G7 Welcoming Committee: [www.G7welcomingcommittee.com](http://www.G7welcomingcommittee.com))
- 6) **The Gamits**: "Don't Make Me Show You" from "A Small Price to Pay" CD (Suburban Home Records: [www.suburbanhomerecords.com](http://www.suburbanhomerecords.com))
- 15) **Strike Anywhere**: "Earthbound" from "Chorus of One" EP (Red Leader: [www.redleaderrecords.com](http://www.redleaderrecords.com))
- 3) **Billy**: "The Ride" from "The Band" (The Life Recording Company-- look for an upcoming album on Law of Inertia Records)
- 18) **The June Spirit**: "New Jersey in My Rearview" from "Treat Me Like Someone Else" (Negative Progression: [www.negativeprogression.com](http://www.negativeprogression.com))
- 24) **Kolya**: "Robots Dream In Black And White" (Caulfield: [www.caulfieldrecords.com](http://www.caulfieldrecords.com))
- 19) **Breaking Pangea**: "Wedding Dress" from "Taking Apart the Words" MCD (Undecided: [www.undecidedrecords.com](http://www.undecidedrecords.com))
- 11) **All Else Failed**: "The Hutton Play" from "Archetype" CD (Now or Never: [www.noworneverrecords.com](http://www.noworneverrecords.com))
- 20) **New Idea Society**: "Don't Leave Your Room" from S/T MCD (Undecided: [www.undecidedrecords.com](http://www.undecidedrecords.com))
- 5) **Saturday Supercade**: "Simple Words" from "Everyone is a Target" (Liberation: [www.liberationrecords.com](http://www.liberationrecords.com))
- 4) **Stapleton**: "Our Returning Champion" from "On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places" CD (Subjugation: [www.subjugation.co.uk](http://www.subjugation.co.uk))
- 22) **Fairweather**: "Soundtrack to the Ride" from "If They Move... Kill Them" CD (Equal Vision: [www.equalvision.com](http://www.equalvision.com))
- 13) **Douglass Kings**: "Forgotten" from "Inc.' CD ([www.douglasskings.com](http://www.douglasskings.com))
- 10) **Kite Flying Society**: "Nothing" (Goodbye Blue Skies: [www.emote.org/goodbyeblueskies](http://www.emote.org/goodbyeblueskies))
- 16) **Recover**: "Pardon the Wait" from "Rodeo And Picasso" (Fueled by Ramen: [www.redleaderrecords.com](http://www.redleaderrecords.com))
- 21) **Eiffel**: "Audiblenarchotic" from "Audible Narchotic" CD (Undecided: [www.undecidedrecords.com](http://www.undecidedrecords.com))
- 26) **Spark Lites the Friction**: "Snakecharmer" from "l'homme robotik" CD (Trustkill: [www.trustkill.com](http://www.trustkill.com))
- 27) **Nora**: "For The Travelers" from "Loser's Intuition" CD (Trustkill: [www.trustkill.com](http://www.trustkill.com))

**Mastered by Jeff Merkel at Mach 8 Mastering ([www.mach8.com](http://www.mach8.com))**



# VIDEOS

## by Jonah

**Behind the Music That Sucks (Heavy.com/Arrow Entertainment)** Here we go, the animated take off of VH1's now notorious documentary series, Behind the Music. In theory, Behind the Music That Sucks sounds like a great idea, but it doesn't translate very well. The plots are just too ridiculous and too short (about 3 minutes each) to really go anywhere. Sure, the idea of Fred Durst being discovered by Celine Dion, and Stryper joining forces with Pope John Paul, seem sort of funny, but they're cheap laughs that get old fast, even in such a condensed format. Other groups parodied include Bon Jovi, NIN, Smashing Pumpkins, Kiss, Kid Rock, Garbage, and AC/DC; but they all tend to blend together in a bland cocktail of sophomoric humor and lo-fi animation. Real faces pasted onto cartoon bodies is funny at first, but after watching six or seven of the segments, they're not enough to get past the weak writing and futility of this entire project. The Heavy website ([www.heavy.com](http://www.heavy.com)) is full of animations, usually funnier than these are, but I guess they picked these to go with a 'rock' theme in a new line of videos. Fine, but it's going to take more than a constantly masturbating Marilyn Manson and flatulence jokes to get a laugh out of me. At least South Park can get Radiohead on their show.

**Braid "Killing A Camera" (Bifocal Media)** Four shows in five days. This video captures the final days of Braid as they played various Illinois hot spots. Whether you were a fan of Braid or not, it's impossible to deny their influence in the indie scene, and this video is a testament to their legacy. A more tangible testament are lucky kids at their last shows who look like they're having simultaneous orgasms or something while their heroes play classics like "Please Drive Faster." I'd heard rumors that the reason the band broke up was because they all hated each other, but either that is untrue or these lads are really good actors, because they seem downright chummy when the camera is rolling. The editing is excellent, and all the 16-millimeter film footage really stands out, I just wish they could have used more of it (the rest of it is recorded on digital video); but obviously these kids don't have a Spielbergian budget. Their live material begins to grow tedious, song-after-song-after-song, but if I were a Braid fanatic like most of the kids in the video, I'm sure I would be creaming my jeans as well (term shamelessly lifted from Tenacious D). If you're a Braidhead, I'm sure this is already in your archives; and if you're a fan of that Hey Mercedes band, you should pick this up and see what things were like before the indie scene was saturated with mediocrity.

**The Edge of Quarrel (Lower Level/J is for Jerk Production)** Making a movie is much different than making a record. Logistically, as well as financially, a film is something you can't scrimp on. You need high-quality filmstock, skilled actors, and most importantly, the money to put everything together. That said, "The Edge of Quarrel," leaves a lot to be desired. It's not that these kids didn't make a valiant effort, it's just that it seems that they didn't know exactly what they were doing, and it shows. To put it bluntly, this movie has more holes in it than Rick ta Life's face. There's a reason why Hollywood casts trained professionals instead of hardcore kids. I hate to say it, but this film made Rick Rodney's performance in "Godmoney," look like Oscar material. The other major weakness here is the writing, or lack thereof. While this film focuses on the conflict between the straight edge and punk scenes, it's painfully repetitive and lacks resolution. If I wanted to watch hardcore kids fight each other for two hours I'd go to a Hatebreed show. Finally, I have to complain about the live performances. While it's understandable that they would want to use pre-recorded music for live sets from the Murder City Devils (who also act in the film), Trial, and Botch, the least they could do is make the performances look realistic. The keyboardist for Murder City isn't present during their set, which leaves me wondering if she somehow knew how this video would turn out. Don't get me wrong, I think that the idea of "Punks vs. Straight-edgers," is a great concept for a film, and it's obvious that a lot of work went into this. Unfortunately, "The Edge of Quarrel," comes off more like a student film acted out by Seattle scenesters than a documentary of the conflicts within the punk community. If I want to see kids in bands who can't act, I'll watch "Bands on the Run." At least on VH-1 the fights and music are real.

**Hellfest 2000 (Trustkill) DVD** In case you were living under a rock-- which I apparently was even though I had recently graduated from a college less than an hour and a half's drive from Syracuse, the site of the fest-- the 2000 Hellfest was very big, it was very loud, it was very hot, and it was filled with lots of boys in metalcore bands who played to lots of boys who like to kickbox when they listen to music. This DVD tried to document the show by including loads of footage of the crowd outside the fest, short interviews with each of the 15 bands that played, and then up to 2 songs a piece for each band. Honestly, I never saw why anyone would want to watch a video of a live show. I could understand wanting to buy a Minor Threat video to see what the hell the greatest hardcore band of all time looked like live. But, other than a few notable exceptions-- like Eighteen Visions, Shai Hulud, Every Time I Die, and Converge-- the show seemed pretty boring from where I'm sitting (which is front of my computerized DVD player spending more time opening the ungodly amounts of mail I received than actually watching the movie). From the interviews, I can tell you this much: Eighteen Visions are concelated dickheads, Scott Vogel of Buried Alive is a dork, the Everytime I Die guys seem cool, Mike Ski of Brother's Keeper is also a dork (in a good way, unlike Scott Vogel), and the guys from Shai Hulud seem like nerds (in a good way as well). There you have it. [Guest review by Ross. He promised Jonah he wouldn't do it again]

**The Show (Side One Dummy)** This is a collection of highlights from the first season of the L.A. based TV series, aptly titled "The Show." Essentially, "The Show" is a long commercial for the bands on Side One Dummy Records (half the bands in this video have released material on the aforementioned label). According to the box, it's 'hosted' by one of the guys from 22 Jacks (are they still around?), and contains live performances, interviews, and/or music videos from the likes of H2O, No Use For A Name, MXPX, Avail, Flogging Molly, Kill Your Idols, Less Than Jake, 7 Seconds, Madcap, and the Ataris. I say "according to the box," because I couldn't sit through this entire video. In fact, I made it about fifteen minutes. Personally, I could care less about what it's like to hang out at the Warped Tour with MXPX, or be in the studio with H2O. I also know that I'd rather play Atari than see what it's like to chill backstage with them, but maybe that's just because I'm the jaded music-critic. Then again, maybe not.

**Sick of it All "The Story So Far" (Fat Wreck Chords)** Finally, a band who actually deserves a documentary! This video traces Sick of it All's existence from the now legendary alleyway where they hung out, to their spot as one of the world's top hardcore acts. Individual segments with each of the band members- Lou, Armand, Pete, and Craig- give the viewer a rare glimpse into the everyday lives of these New Yorkers; like Lou playing with his dog or Craig making pasta in his modest apartment (what happened to those major label royalties, guys?) The live footage is what we've come to expect from SOIA, a trainwreck of fury and precision, with the audience and band feeding off each other via flailing limbs and swinging fists. SOIA's peers also recount old stories: Walter from Quicksand, Toby from H2O (their old roadie), and even the boys from Hot Water Music. As a bonus there is a collection of music videos from the band, including their most recent, an anime for the song "District." If you're curious why so many people seem to have that elusive "alleyway crew" tattoo, this video should make it evident. You don't need to be Bill Gates to see that SOIA are here to stay.

**That Darn Punk (Kung Fu Films)** Think the Vandals are funny? If you don't (i.e., you don't have the mentality of a toddler), chances are that you're going to loathe "That Darn Punk." It starts out promising enough, a guy in a struggling punk band called the Big Tippers (played by Joe Escalante from the Vandals) is engaged in the archetypal rock n' roll dilemma: Whether or not he should cheat on his girlfriend with a gorgeous groupie (now let's be honest, how many good-looking groupies do you think the Vandals have gotten in their lifetime?). He decides to go for it, and the next thing you know he is wandering around the desert for an hour and a half. A few murders, an encounter with a deranged tuba player, a pregnant drug addict, and a dead cop resurrected by aliens to torment the protagonist are just a few of the zany ideas the Vandals think tank came up with to entertain us, the viewer. Do I expect Citizen Kane from the band that gave us "Live Fast Diarrhea?" Of course not. What I do expect is enough coherence that I can actually follow the plot, and a longer than three minute cameo from Kyle Gass of Tenacious D (which they conveniently save until the last 15 minutes of the film). The surprise ending was the high point of this film, but by the time I got to it I didn't really care what happened to the character, I just wanted this to be over. If you went to the Warped tour, at least you'll like the soundtrack, which features AFI, Rancid, The Ataris and No Motiv. That Darn Punk seems like a movie that the Vandals can show at parties and say "Hey, check it out, we made a movie!" Unfortunately, if you're not in their exclusive inner circle I would pass on this; I've seen better acting in porno flicks.



# Information Overload: Zine Reviews

## Alarm #10 (\$3 offset / color-glossy cover)

Clearly the editors of this fine publication have subtle, yet important, differences in goals for their publication than the editors of the zine you hold in your hands. You have to wonder about a zine (?) that publishes six 80-page issues a year, does most of their distribution through Tower Records (as opposed to indie distributors), has a content to ad ratio of nearly 3:1, review recent issues of Vice, and has their own clothing line complete with Alarm-brand panties. The similarities are that we tend to share like tastes in punk (if not hip-hop, on which they write about as much as they do on punk), good design, extensive and informative record reviews, and political views. Obviously Alarm are aiming to reach an audience above the punk rock level. This isn't a bad thing: we at LOI flirt with the big time every issue. But, I imagine these guys have their hearts set on leaving the zine realm and entering the magazine status. Again, not a bad thing at all in my opinion. What I do find bad is that they interview interesting bands like the Alkaline Trio and Rival Schools and ask them really dumb questions. Another thing I find dubious, but kind of ironically funny actually, is that they interview the Donnas (who have nothing to say of any interest at all) and preface the interview with the slogan 'twenty-one, dumb, and full of gum.' You have to wonder about a zine that interviews people they find to be "dumb" much less "full of gum." By far the most interesting part of this issue are the talks with Sage Francis (I actually work in the same warehouse as Fat Beats, Francis' sometime label... the Fat Beats guys think Francis is a terrible MC) and All Natural. Hats off for mixing punk and hip-hop intelligently guys. Now if you would just make the punk parts as interesting as the other fine aspects of this zine then we'd be getting somewhere. This has lots of potential, but perhaps will be lost on hardcore kids. (PO Box 200069 Boston, MA 02120) **RS**

## Attention Deficit Disorder #11 (\$4.95 color-glossy cover / newsprint)

It's silly, juvenile, and completely filled with references to drinking beer, but I must admit I'm warming up to this zine. The first few issues were not really my thing. I mean, the BYO / Fat Wreck punk that is their usual focus really isn't my main choice of music. Plus, their obsession with midgits seemed a bit strange to me. And, all the beer jokes! One of the first things my doctor told me when I was diagnosed with ADD is that drinking and drugs affect ADD in very negative ways, hence I obtain from those substances. So, I find it ironic that ADD would cover so much alcohol related topics. I hate to think that some fifteen year old kid is taking his early life cues from a bunch of guys in their late twenties that clearly head to their local bar straight away after work is over. Nonetheless the musical parts of ADD aren't bad. The Fairlanes interview was very informative and shows what great guys they are, the Propgandhi interview was ridiculous (Jordan, stop trying to act like you have a PhD in economics and political science... you're a drummer, damnit!), the Strung Out interview I skimmed since who cares about them, same for the Vandals, and the J Church interview was great... as they always are. So, pick this up if you like skate-punk a la 1995. If you don't, it might be an interesting read with a side of beer nuts and an herbal appetizer. Oh yeah, most of the pictures in here are really dark. (PO Box 8240 Tampa, FL 33674) **RS**

## Ache #2 (\$2.50 offset)

I saw this zine on the Revelation Records page for a while and immediately assumed it was a skating mag because of the picture of Tony Hawk in a pool on the cover. But, I saw this publication in a store in New York so I figured I'd drop a few bucks and check it out. And I have say I'm damn impressed. For a second issue this is fantastic. The interviews and

articles with Your Flesh, Glen E. Friedman, Cometbus, Change Zine, and Computer Cougar are very well researched, articulately executed, and in depth. I think the difference between a new zine and an older one is that in a new zine interviewers are uncomfortable asking direct questions to people who may be older and far more accomplished than themselves. This kid, named Armen, is clearly a natural. His interviews are top notch and sometimes better than you would find in a zine like Punk Planet or, gasp, Law of Inertia! Plus, the layout is nice and interesting and the few record reviews here are quite good. This is a very welcome surprise. **RS**

## Hanging Like a Hex #15 (\$3 color-glossy cover / newsprint)

As usual, another great issue of hardcore music and hardcore fun by Ryan and crew. Even though the layout of this publication has been getting a bit more interesting (and less cluttered to boot), I have to say that this is the first cover of a Hex issue in a long time that I've been at all disappointed with. But, if you've ever read a edition of upstate NY's best zine, you know what to expect: great interviews with bands like Poison the Well (who, by the way, seem totally nuts based on the events in this interview), All Else Failed, Turmoil, Embodiment, Inking, Euphone, and Cursive. In addition, there are features, like the "Hardcore Deadpool" in which Ryan predicts how a few hardcore personalities, like Karl from Earth Crisis, Steven of Cave-in, and the entire Juliana Theory, will die. Perhaps the best thing about Hanging Like a Hex are the reviews. While too many zines have standard 5-line reviews that really don't make a judgement call one way or the other about a particular recording, Hex lays it on the line and lets you know exactly what they think: no holds barred. You have to respect that, especially if you aren't sure whether or not to buy the Metroschifter compilation. Overall, another great edition of the Hex. If you haven't picked up this zine by now, then you are a moron and you deserve a poke in the eye. Get it now. C'mon, 3 lousy bucks is a good deal for a few hours of top quality reading material. (201 Maple Ln. N. Syracuse, NY 13212) **RS**

## I Stand Alone #14 (color cover / newsprint-type paper)

Some zines just want an excuse to goof off with the tape recorder on with a well-known band to share in the conversation. I won't name names. We look down on those zines. Some zines, like Skyscraper for instance, try to get at the heart of what makes the individual band members play the kind of music they do and feel the music they play. This can be considered a high-brow approach (or a music geek approach to put it another way). We at LOI try to ask a variety of questions, usually picking a theme in each interview to explore with any band willing to participate. I like to think we have no common theme, but if I had to pick one very prevalent thread throughout LOI I'd say we try to find out what makes people who make music bother to get out there and play. I Stand Alone tends to have a different approach than most. Anyone familiar with this staple of the hardcore zine world knows that they cover what tends to be macho music--which is odd considering ISA is the product of a female. Luckily for us, the hardcore community, this is a good thing. Instead of re-hashing the same macho bullshit we've all heard a million times, Adele Collins, the zine's editor, tries to dig deep inside these seemingly testosterone fueled manly-men and get them to be emo. She doesn't try to get them to show what they love about music, or why their political views are they way they are. Rather, she asks questions about the inner-musician: "tell me about the most embarrassing thing you've ever said", "tell me about the last time you cried", "tell me about your favorite scar". And she does it so well that guys like Rick Ta Life seem like teddy bears

when she's through with them. With that said, every issue of I Stand Alone is a good one. Pick this up before Adele realizes that more kids are interested in moshing to Stretch Armstrong then reading about them. (PO Box 321 Buckner, KY 40010) **RS**

## Muddle #17 (\$3 glossy cover / newsprint)

What is there left to say about a publication that arguably made the music zine cool again? I credit Muddle with starting a late-'90s wave of zines like Status, Eventide, Hanging Like a Hex, Nothing Left, Second Nature, and the humble publication you hold in your hand. It is no secret that the LOI camp is very close with the Muddle camp. Hell, I saw Ron a few weeks ago, e-mailed Dave last week, and Jonah stayed at Nate's house in Philly a while back. It is also no secret that we learned a lot from Muddle and even conceived the idea of a zine called Law of Inertia out of inspiration from the Muddle guys. We thought, if these four nice guys from some dumb college town could make a respected, beloved publication then we could too. So, after a two year absence we get the newest edition of a now-legendary magazine. It's perfect bound, has a pretty cover, and one can't help but shake with glee when holding a newly discovered copy of this magazine in their hands. That is why it is sad for me to say that the boys I learned so much from and have come to respect as peers have let you and me down and turned out an inferior, rushed product. Sure, the interviews are in depth and insightful, the reviews are plenty and descriptive, but there's something missing. I'm not sure if it's my arrogance or simply the changing nature of the zine world, but something about this issue of Muddle seems hurried. Maybe it's the interviews with bands like Lynnyrds Innards (who?), or the very short and uninformative articles on the Hot Snakes, The Wedding Present, Reubens Accomplish, and Furious IV, but I get the distinct feeling that most of the past two years has not been spent working on the zine. And more power to them, they've worked hard and have succeeded in making a wonderful publication... this issue just happens to be not up to par. Mind you, there are glimpses of the greatness we have all come to expect from the Muddle folk, such as the wonderful talks with The Flaming Lips, Les Savy Fav, and the peeps behind the 40/40 club; the delightful piece by Jim Testa on Bruce Springsteen; and the always pleasing reviews section (which are really old reviews in general). Let's put it this way, I haven't given up hope. If I know these guys, they'll be back on track in no time and will have another super issue out in under a year. Until then, I still have their 14th issue which remains a zinedom milestone achievement. (PO Box 189 Northport, NY 11768) **RS**

## The New Scheme #3 (newsprint)

Some might call the young Boulder, CO kids who do this zine precocious. In the envelope that contained this zine I got the standard promo sheet, a pack of New Scheme matches, and a business card with the name of the editor proudly printed in streamlined graphics. Perhaps precocious is the wrong word. Perhaps Stuart and Co. are simply trying to be professional. Unfortunately they may be mistaking professionalism with gimmicks (yes, we here at LOI even critique your presentation... major labels listen up.) Nonetheless, The New Scheme isn't a bad read at all. While I really can't see any blatant differences in quality from their first issue to this one, what we get here isn't half bad. Although the e-mail interviews scream, "I didn't have the guts to face these musicians/writers in public, I wimped out and did e-mail interviews" which always sucks, I find that these kids are earnest and love the music they cover. In past issues we have seen amazingly run-of-the-mill interviews with bands like Jets to Brazil; this issue features a somewhat obtuse interview



with the bassist of Shai Hulud, a rather uninformative yet interesting piece on Anasarca, a talk with that writer Adam Voith (of which I only read half), and an interview with the Thumbs. The latter interview is where I really saw hope. Even though it was an e-mail interview, TNS was lucky enough to have the Thumbs give honest and in depth responses. Overall, I enjoyed this zine and I like what they're trying to do. But, I think they have to ask themselves a few questions in future issues: a) how can we set ourselves apart; b) how can we make our interviews more than just a smattering of random facts with no cohesion; and, c) does anyone really want to read 2 pages about Shai Hulud's Japanimation video collection? Oh yeah, very above average record review section. Nice job there guys. (PO Box 19873 Boulder, CO 80308) **RS**

## No One Touches the Dream Team #5 (half-size/ xeroxed)

What "No One Touches The Dream Team" doesn't have in aesthetics (i.e. glossy cover), it more than makes up for in wit and sarcasm. Especially sarcasm. Instead of relying on the standard zine fare, NOTDT delves into new territory: detailed reviews of buttons, reviews of the envelopes that records were sent in, and a fictional interview with someone with a 200 lb. head. Yeah, its editor probably doesn't get out too much, but if his social habits fuel a project like this, who cares? The aforementioned editor also has a personal vendetta against organized religion, which is exhibited in the tasteless yet hilarious article about having Jesus' fetus on his keychain and a first-person debate between God and science (guess who wins). NOTDT's columnists are just as cynical and witty as their editor, and though this zine is an uppercut to the collective jaw of political correctness, it's the funniest thing I've read in a long, long time. Get out of your chair, get a self-addressed stamped envelope and mail it to (Chris Leeds, PO BOX 19561, Boulder, CO 80308-2561) **JB**

## Razorcake #2 (\$3 glossy cover / newsprint)

Okay, here's my dilemma: the address for this zine says LA, but a good majority of the content revolves around the United Kingdom, from the Flogging Molly (who are basically Irish when you think about it) to the article on Bloody Sunday. I will say this, what I read-- which was around 50%-- was pretty damn good. There was a very clever article on why Elvis should not be the king of rock and roll (and, while I whole heartedly agree, I'm pretty sure the king shouldn't be Richie Valens either); an interesting piece of Ireland's Bloody Sunday (not the U2 song) which, unfortunately, was missing its first part; and a fascinatingly uncompassionate essay about underprivileged public school kids written by the kids' teacher. I actually read a few of the interviews, which were far less entertaining than the expository writing here. The Primal Scream interview, which never made it to the cover oddly enough, was bizarre to say the least. The writer, a chap named Nardwuar, knew a whole lot about the career of Mani, the Scream's bassist, (which is even more odd, since Nardwuar is Canadian-- couldn't you guess from his(?) name?) but hardly listened to Mani long enough to have a cohesive conversation. Rather it was sort of "let's see how many obtuse facts about Mani of Primal Scream's career we can fit into five pages!" The Scared of Chaka interview was cool and confirms my belief that those guys are super congenial and that if you've read one interview with them you've read them all. Didn't read the Crow interview as I've never heard of them (I bet they're British), nor did I read the Hot Water Music interview as those guys never seem to have anything interesting to say-- at least not in the first 20 interviews I read with them. But, I'm sure they were all good, as the interviews with Flogging Molly and

Leatherface definitely were up to par. Overall, I'd say this is quite a solid second effort and I imagine there are very good things in store for Razorcake: replacing that shit-rag Skratz as SoCal's biggest monthly punk zine. (PO Box 42129 LA, CA 90042) **RS**

## Sea of Seed #2 (half size/screen printed cover)

"Welcome to the rural Midwest." That's the sentence that caught my eye in the index, and it doubles as the mission statement of this personal zine. There are a few interviews with Midwestern punk visionaries like Adrienne from the Anniversary (and let's hope she's more intelligent than she came across in this interview), Seth from Status, and Lance from the Dillinger Four-- the latter revolving around his experiences growing up in Minnesota. The personal writings are the best part of this Sea of Seed, particularly the editor's column on the "Rural Midwestern Indigenous Perspective" (yeah, he's in college). However, I did feel that there was too much background info on his hometown of Windom, Minnesota (does anyone care when the town's Fair Store Building was established?). As a whole, this zine is a success, and the beautiful silk-screened covers can only help it gain notoriety. Am I actually homesick for my parents' house in Ohio? (Tim Smith, 355 9th Street, Windom, MN 56101) **JB**

## Skyscraper #9 (\$4.99 glossy cover / offset)

Anyone that regularly reads the zine reviews section in either Law of Inertia or Skyscraper knows that we don't have the best of relationships. They find our zine to be overly childish while we have found theirs to be a bit devoid of personality and charm. It's nothing big, just a difference in opinion of what makes for good independent literature with an underground musical focus. With that said, I am pleased to say that I thoroughly enjoyed this issue of Skyscraper and for a change see what the big deal is over this magazine. Weighing in at 178 pages, this hefty tome has very very well done interviews with Lyle Preslar of Minor Threat, Rocket from the Crypt (which is basically a longer version of the RFTC interview in this issue of LOI... does this band have anything unique to say? Food for thought), Melt Banana, Superdrag, and !!! (yes, that's a band name) among others. There were some shorter, albeit still pleasing, articles on Queens of the Stone Age, Love Life, and Beautiful Skin. What really sets Skyscraper apart from the pack is surely not their graphic design skills, which were nonetheless far more pleasing in this issue than previous ones, or their better than average knowledge of the bands they cover, but rather their ability to provide very insightful looks into the lives and music of the artists some of us have come to love. To some, the writing might seem a bit dense, and, yes, sterile, but this magazine is clearly for hardcore music lovers and hardcore music lovers alone. With a good mix of styles and genres the interviewing in this issue is up there with any zine in the world. Now, if they would only parlay their obvious talents into something for those that could care less about a seven page Holy Childhood interview and perhaps have some non-musical / editorial content as well. Fine piece of work here. (PO Box 4432 Boulder, CO 80306) **RS**

## Under the Volcano #62 (\$3 newsprint/color cover)

This issue the Strong Islanders are representin' with interviews from The (International) Noise Conspiracy, The MovieLife, Unwound, Dynamite Boy, as well as a few lesser-known bands. I know that UTV has been around for a decade, and it looks fine and all that, but content-wise it leaves a lot to be desired. While most of the bands have interesting things to say, UTV's single-page format prevents the interviews from ever getting too in-depth. Also, the interviewers tend to rely too much on cliched questions like "Where did you get your name?"

and references about the band's label, instead of trying to learn what make the band members tick. The review section was more extensive, but these kids seem to be afraid to give a bad review (and trust me, many of the records they got were deserving of bad reviews). Sure, these are all things that will improve in time, but isn't ten years long enough? I have some friends who live on Long Island and apparently this zine is free there, making it a great resource; but if UTV wants to break outside of the local scene, they're going to have to step it up. (PO Box 236, Nesconset, NY 11767) **JB**

## Verbicide #2 (\$2 newsprint/offset cover)

I feel kind of biased writing this review since I was interviewed in it, but we are a bit short of time and we seem to lack zine reviewers here at LOI, so I'll try to give you as objective an opinion as I know how. The second issue of Verbicide is a lot like the second issue of Law of Inertia. The interviews are short, sweet, and simply scratch the surface without ever getting involved (or long) enough to be informative; the layout is daring yet immature and makes mistakes that will be avoided with more experience; and the writings that do not concern music are obtuse and sometimes self-indulgent (as is shown in the numerous sections featuring "artsy" photographs and poetry). But, unlike many zines out there that start with the prospect of free records, advertising dollars, and fame and fortune foremost in mind, Verbicide seems to have its heart in the right place. Namely, that place is in the love of producing something important to themselves. The interviews with bands like Coalesce, Fabulous Disaster, Helium, and 1000XNO are too short to really get into anything interesting (I've said it once and I'll say it again: e-mail interviews suck), and the AFI interview, while easily the longest one in the zine is basically the same AFI interview we've all read 40 times before. Overall, I can't wait to see what is in store for Verbicide in the future. I hope they keep at it, because this is one of the more promising zines I've seen in a while. (Jackson Ellis, Yale Station PO Box 206512 New Haven, CT 06520) **RS**

## Wonka Vision #14 (free offset/color glossy cover)

Wonka Vision is a punk rock zine with a little bit of everything: sex advice, gossip, interviews, reviews, poetry, etc. Most of the writing is hit-or-miss because it has a ton of outside contributors, and the editor's article on the perils of lymphangioma is definitely the highlight of this issue. I commend him for writing about such a personal issue. Now back to the shit talking. This issue has two faces on its cover, Conor from Bright Eyes and Hunter (who?) from AFI. Unfortunately, the "interview" with Conor, is a long record review accompanied by a few short quotes from the tormented songwriter. Very disappointing. The feature on AFI is an interview with their bass player, who isn't even an original member, and is a mere two pages long (even with a huge font). Thankfully, shorter interviews with Thursday and Pedro the Lion are more cohesive and far less misleading. Wonka Vision has potential, but right now it's too much of a hodgepodge of, well, everything. Random inserts (color) of graffiti should be replaced with more information about cover artists or at least something that relates to the rest of the magazine. I think these guys have taken too big a bite out of their Wonka bar, and they're going to need to re-plan this project if they ever want to find that golden ticket. (670 Inca St. Suite B-1, Denver, CO 80204) **JB**



# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: **RS** | Jonah Bayer: **JB** | Jason Murphy: **JM** | du proserpio: **dup** | Adam Parks: **AP** |  
Jonah Brucker-Cohen: **JBC** | Adam Thorman: **AT** | Nick Tamburro: **NT** | Dan Frantic: **DF**

1

**Acetone "York Blvd." (Vapor Records) CD-** The advance copy of Acetone's new album, York Blvd sports a prominently placed sticker with a greeting from band leader Richie Lee which reads: "There is so much noise out there, sometimes you just want something to sound pretty." Assuming that Lee's statement is a self-congratulatory reference to his own music, the listener is forced to decide if Acetone's guitar/bass/drums drowsy atmospheric noodlings actually qualify as "pretty" or if they more resemble anonymous 70's prog records played at 24 rpms. This reviewer tends to lean towards the latter. Clearly, the fellows in Acetone are adept musicians who've listened to plenty of Traffic, Gram Parsons and Pink Floyd and, perhaps in reverence to their idols, they appear to have consumed a copious amount of drugs somewhere along the line. Unfortunately, this combination leads to nothing good. York Blvd prods along for 50+ minutes with nary a bright spot save for "Like I Told You" which ups the ante with an organ, a catchy beat that for once clocks in over 25 mph (just barely), and some interesting fuzzed out guitar/bass interplay. Perhaps this review would look different written by someone with a higher threshold for mellow, deliberate music, but even when listened to right before bedtime, the most noteworthy thing about this record is that the vocals sound like Mike Watt on morphine, and who wants to go to bed with that mental image? [Guest reviewer: Jon Orren]

**Affinity "If I Only Had an Ocean" (Dead Droid) CD -** I guess all I really want out of life is a peanut butter and banana sandwich now and then, a roof, money for rent, and music that is not going to become wallpaper. By wallpaper, I mean music that has no qualities that cause to hold the listener's attention. Granted, this band's music in itself is not wallpaper: it's pretty heavy, the bass grabs you, and there is a certain amount of dynamic change to catch your attention. But when a genre has been done over and over and over again and the band in questions brings nothing new to the equation, then the listener's attention is going to drift to other things (like money for rent and peanut butter and banana sandwiches). Granted, this is pretty good in terms of metal hardcore (I caught myself nodding in time a few times), but like I said, same old, same old. Just give me something new and we'll talk. Until then....  
**JM**

**Affront "People Who Live in Glass Houses" (Phyte) CD-** Okay. There is a difference between "old school Washington DC hardcore" and "Washington DC old school hardcore". The former is an historic or antiquated version of a still existing genre. The latter is a modern-day effort to emulate such a version. Affront is Washington DC old school hardcore. Much

to my dismay. This is very boring music, puked up from years and years of listening to the same ideas be recycled over and over again. It may be nostalgic, but it's also pathetic. Same angry and pointless lyrics that lost all meaning after around 1988. The only thing that's different is that now there is a light-blue and silver layout that is designed to make you think, "Hmmm. Maybe this is sensitive and insightful independent music. The colors suggest a less violent and abrasive music, and promote the notion of more contemplative and original works. Hmmm." **AP**

**Against All Authority "Nothing New For Trash Like You" (Hopeless) CD-** Man, I was all set to give this a bad review. I was going to explain how I had written them off as a band after seeing them play with the Criminals three years ago, when the horn section damn near fell asleep on stage. It was one of the worst live performances I've ever seen. Then, when Ross hands me the cd, I said, "Oh, AAA," with a self-satisfied smirk, thinking I had them all figured out. Then I popped the CD in and was shocked to hear some really good punk-ska blaring out. This CD is a collection of all of their old 7's and comp tracks from 1992-2000. They race through 17 songs of adrenaline-filled goodness the likes of which I thought I would never hear due to the fact that all the good ska-punk bands had broken up and formed emo bands. There's even a cover of the 80s pop classic, "Centerfold." Then on the 18th and last track, they had to fuck it up. They included a cover of Propagandhi's "Ska Sucks." They play it horribly, over-exaggeratedly screaming the lyrics, and completely ska-ing out the instrumental section with roaming horn lines. Point taken. You aren't only in it for the bucks. You stuck around. Congratulations. The song was a generalization and fit more than just a few bands in the genre. Propagandhi is a great band, and that is a great song and you butchered it. For that, you get a firm slap on the wrist and lose any and all punk points you may have accumulated over the years. Shame on you, and respect your superiors. I might add that with Moon Ska Records finally closing it's doors, the '90s ska wave is pretty much dead. Rest in peace. **AT**

**Agent 51 "Just Keep Runnin'" (Adeline) CD-** They might not hail from Berkeley, but Agent 51 definitely seem to be taking a leaf or two from Rancid's book, if not paraphrasing chapters in their entirety. Not that that's necessarily a bad thing - the East Bay punk scene circa 1993 was great, and while at time it may sound as if Agent 51 is simply aping bands that came before them, at least they're doing so with energy and aplomb. With 20 songs on the CD, you're certainly getting more bang for your buck than was the case with, say, the last few AFI records. **DF**

**The Alkaline Trio "From Here to Infirmary" (Vagrant) CD-** This CD knocks me on my ass. Not because it's so loud or hard or technical, but rather just because the songs here are all very intense in a serious and melancholy way. Songs about drinking, death, complacency, and disillusionment add to a record that is as catchy as it is beautiful. Come to think of it, this is really the first pop-punk record I think I've ever called beautiful. The songs aren't that complex musically, but the subject matter and the brilliant recording really bring out all those little subtleties that the remained latent in the Trio's earlier work. This is a wonderful record. One that probably will not win them MTV acclaim, but one that is strong and important. Buy this or suck. **RS**

**All Else Failed "Archetype" (Now or Never) CD-** After reading an interview with this band in Hanging Like a Hex in which All Else Failed's singer-- who is a cop, mind you-- talked about wearing a T-shirt onstage at Hell Fest which said something to the effect of: "Mumia was a killer," this band surely intrigued me. Some people may only want to hear music they have heard positive things about, but not me. I like listening to people who have opposing view points from my own and who are sometimes obnoxious and shocking, as the singer of this Philadelphia band certainly is. So, here we get All Else Failed on what is quickly becoming what of the best power-violence labels in the nation. Yes they are heavy, yes they probably break lots of stuff when they play live (including bones and arteries). But, unlike many bands-- most notably Dillinger Escape Plan, who is perhaps the best known power-violence band playing today-- All Else Failed have a definite sense of dynamics, and even more importantly a sense of how to change the mood from all out anger and disgust to sorrow and despair and then maybe even hope. Sure their singer sounds like he is about to cry (not in an emo way) when he sings, but when All Else Failed is playing as loud and as furiously as they possibly can there are few bands that can match their strength. Not bad. **RS**

**American Analog Set "Through the 90s: Singles and Unreleased" (Emperor Jones) CD-** American Analog Set make feel-good music. After three stellar albums, it's about time their rare recordings made it to the surface. Singer/guitarist Andre Kenny's lyrics are simple, heartfelt, and unencumbered by pretention. Each one of these songs show us why AAS are so well received. Mark Smith's airy drum beats, Lisa Roschmann's atmospheric keyboards, and Greg Hines's stolid bass playing all combine to punctuate the relaxing feel of their sound. "The Only Living Boy Around" is the quintessential indie pop song because it makes you feel fuzzy while simultaneously begging for you to sing along. Most bands wouldn't touch this level of optimism, but AAS wear their music with more pride than any sappy pop outfit. This collection of hard-to-find EPs and 7-inch singles is a worthy addition to any indie library. **JBC**

**American Nightmare "Background Music" (Equal Vision) CD-** This CD does nothing for me. A singer that sounds like Lou from Sick of it All after he listened to a bit too much thrash metal, guitars that are simple and fast in that older Agnostic Front way, and a drummer who knows two beats: fast and really fast. It's not that I don't like this type of power-violence, it's just that every song here sounds exactly the same, there are no dynamics, and the lyrics are a bit too "one two fuck you" for me. Even though this is loud and aggressive, I still have to relegate it to nothing more than background music, and that's a bold manner to describe a hardcore band. **RS**

**American Steel "Jagged Thoughts" (Look-out!) CD-** Here is an ambitious album for you. This is really the first time I've given American Steel a good listen even though all my friends in San Francisco eagerly proclaimed their greatness and something about how they were going to save Bay Area punk. All I know is that their first record on New Disorder sounded like Rancid to me, their second record (on Look-out!) sounded like a more Caribbean version of

the Clash, while this record strikes me as an amalgamation of a whole bunch of sounds. On the first song, "Shrapnel," I hear a power-pup tune not far off from something Weezer might play. The rest of the album is much more subtle and subdued. Some songs sound like they could have been recorded in a 1950s garage recording studio of a band playing Toots and the Maytals tunes, while others sound like the more punk rock side of Bruce Springsteen-- and yes, the Boss is punk. Overall, I have to say I really like this. The guitar tones are just warm enough to sound like they come from an overdriven tube amp while the bass and drums lock in perfectly to create a sound not unlike "Give Em Enough Rope" era Clash. Good stuff here. Maybe too derivative at times, but a fine product indeed. **RS**

**AM/FM "Mutilate Us" (Polyvinyl) CD-** Sometimes musicians get record deals based solely on the bands they used to be in. For example, Meagan from Copper's latest project Idle Hands instantly got signed to Trustkill, and Ari from Lifetime's new band Zero Zero reportedly got signed without ever playing a single show. There seems to be some type of stigma attached to people in popular bands, but as Kevin Seconds himself will tell you, previous successes doesn't always carry over to new projects. Brian Sokel used to be in Franklin-- a fairly large indie band in their own right while they were together. However this fact alone does not warrant release of an album of he and his friend doing sub-standard pop tunes, on a reputable label like Polyvinyl, no less. Stylistically this is along the lines of Neutral Milk Hotel, with a little more self-indulgent electronica, and could not keep my attention for more than five minutes at a time. Would this record ever have been released if Brian hadn't spent years honing his skills in Franklin? Probably not. But it does mean that I expect more from him than I would from an artist I had never heard of, and this just doesn't cut it-- that's the trade-off. **JB**

**Anti-Flag "Underground Network" (Fat) CD-** I recall first hearing about these guys almost 5 years ago. I faintly recall hearing some split releases or 7"s. But I don't exactly remember this sound-- very fast melodic punk stuff with a audible yearning to create some punchy anthems. Believe it or not, they pull it off about 65% of the time. It's only when you sit and think about whom to compare this band to that it weakens the sound. Vocals have a touch of Op Ivy, but much tighter. Guitar has the Clash-like chopppiness with a lot more fast leads and (I'm dating myself with this term) busts. Apparently the point of this act is to bring back some of the actual edge of punk rock. In other words, they're trying to take a stand instead of just making tons off T-shirt sales. Fighting off the usual malaise caused by some of the more formula acts on Fat, this act gets my vote for being just derivative enough and anchoring their meaty sound with a real sense of honest commitment. Every generation in punk needs some act whose lyrics stick with you. I think this one's a keeper and a very solid suggestion for anyone in their all-important punk teens. **dup**



# S

**Arab on Radar** "Yahweh or the Highway" (Skin Graft) CD- What is it with Rhode Island and homosexual noise-rock bands?

Huh? Arab on Radar

serves up eight tracks of music that you definitely have to be in the mood for. There's a little bit of preplanned riffage and beats, but mostly improved and processed noise, all supporting lyrics chock-full of sex imagery. The whole package seems intended and bound to offend, keeping conservative listeners a fortnight outside of their comfort zone. I enjoyed some of the music on Yahweh, but it's not a disc I'm likely to need to hear again. Arab on Radar spelled backwards is "Darth Vader." **AP**

**The Applesseed Cast** "Low Level Owl: Volume 1" (Deep Elm) CD- This is so, so, so much better than anything I've ever heard the Applesseed Cast do before. Perhaps you could even add another "so" in there. On the first volume of "Low Level Owl," the Applesseed Cast take a sharp left turn away from the emo genre that until now personified both them and their label Deep Elm, and head deep into the realm of hazy, beautifully-produced shoegazing soundscapes. The songs here are stitched together seamlessly and display a healthy appetite for both musical and technical experimentation. Drums are looped and played backwards, guitars dissolve into thralls of shimmering sound, vocals are virtually lost in a waterfall of echoes. Sure, the Applesseed Cast may still be slightly reminiscent of Sunny Day Real Estate from time to time, but these days they have far more in common with bands like Slowdive or My Bloody Valentine. Moreover, they have shown a remarkable attention to detail in crafting an album that is both powerful and innovative. This is my pick of the issue, particularly for readers who are willing to experiment with music that is more ambient or atmospheric than it is straight-forward and rocking. **DF**

**Arlo** "Up High in the Night" (Sub Pop) CD- Here is where I enter a confusing state of alternate reality. The recording of this album makes it seem like something that Sub Pop forgot to release when grunge was cool. I guess, to a degree, that makes this record timeless, or only confined to a time between the late 70s and the present. To me, that is interesting. What is less interesting is the actual music itself. It goes verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus on every track. Not that this is a formula that doesn't work. On the contrary, it is a formula that has been proven to work since before the late 70s. So, all in all, I don't care much about Arlo. It sounds like they are having fun, and I hope that they are. **AP**

**Ashley Stove** "All Summer Long" (Merge) CD- I guess I just expected more from the Merge label, that's all. Sure, this album has its moments, but this is the label that was started by Superchunk who put out bands like the Music Tapes, Magnetic Fields, Neutral Milk Hotel, and a decent amount more. So what's the problem? The problem is that all the bands I mentioned have created records that capture your attention. Ashley Stove, on the other hand, has not. This album rocks at points (in an cute indie way) and at other points pulls on the heartstrings. But never do I find anything that begs for further inspection. I guess I

wanted layers to dig through, as opposed to a sugary blast that wears off quick. **JM**

**Ashtray Babyhead** "Radio" (Glue Factory) CD- This band troubles me, in that I should not like them but I just can't help myself. Seriously, I could see these guys rocking out on MTV and kids everywhere going nuts, which really frightens me. I know, I know, indie rock snob; we all have our problems we need to work through. These guys are in the same boat for me as Weezer: fun, poppy yet still rocking, and I don't mind sharing them with several million people. And like Weezer, the songs are now lodged in my head, causing me to sing them all the time (like in the bathroom, which disturbs other people thoroughly). The songs all seem simple enough, just begging for me to come down on them, but I can't help myself, I eat music like this up. This is perfect music for rocking out at intersections during the summer with the windows down and not caring that everyone is gawking at you. Road trip! **JM**

**Atom and His Package** "Redefining Music" (Hopeless) CD- Even though the title of his newest record is grossly arrogant (in a tongue in cheek way I hope), Adam Goren may just be a genius. His new full length, his third if memory serves, is a solid piece of work. It's recorded very well, the sequencing is top notch as usual, and the content is goofy as hell. But, what really makes Atom and his Package shine is his implicit ability to make any overeducated, overly nerdy, musically talented kid cool. I mean, Atom turns songs about hockey, that overrated band Franklin, and Madonna into anthems for a generation of dweebs, geeks, dorks, and weirdos. And, for this I find him amazing. While bands like Hatebreed and Earth Crisis cry "only the strong" it's as if Atom make songs for the little guy... the average guy. And he does it with so much style and charisma that no one quite notices he can't sing. This record, as I said, is strong. In comparison to his last full length I would say that this isn't as complete a work in that there are a few throwaway songs here. But, one can't help bob their head or even dance around the room to this stuff. Unlike many gimmick bands who put out one record and fade away, Adam Goren survives not only by being more clever than the rest, but by writing better music as well. **RS**

**Autumn to Ashes** "Too Bad You're Beautiful" (Ferret) CD- This is so embarrassing. Not so much for me, but for the actual band. There are so many problems here that I am just going to list them in a numbered list in no particular order other than the numerical order that will be a result of the numbers in the list. 1) This is an "emo-core" album mixed like a NOFX album, with guitars hard-panned left and right. Big mistake. 2) The token singing parts are absolutely horrendous, like the tone-deaf "I'm singing in the car where no one can hear me" wails of a high school freshman who was held back a couple times in elementary school so he should actually be a junior. 3) The terrible singing parts are visually distinguished from the yelling parts in the insert by blue text as opposed to the darker black text. 4) The song structure is totally weak and the songs develop like a raptor egg tainted by DDT (Note: such eggs do not generally develop well). 5) The lyrics, both poorly sung and poorly notated as I have mentioned, are asinine. I guess five problems isn't really that many, but they are big problems and the overall effect of them is that this album sucks. **AP**

**The Beautys** "Thing of Beauty" (Cheetah) CD- Cheetah Records has come up with another winner. Indiana pop-punkers the Beautys, who did some time on the Mutant Pop label before moving to Cheetah, are happy and upbeat, but their tunes aren't oversimplified, which is refreshing in a day and age when most bands of this ilk are attempting to mine a very empty well for new ideas. Singer Kathleen (aka "Chica Baby") has a terrific voice that reminds me, coincidentally enough, of Jimi Cheetah's former bandmate, Cinder Block of Tilt. Kathleen has some talented musicians to work with, and their music successfully incorporates touches of surf and rockabilly. The weak link here is the lyrics, but really, they're as good as one can reasonably expect for this type of music. **DF**

**Benajmins** "The Art of Disappointment" (Drive-Thru) CD- This album is the epitome of everything that is wrong with the music industry today. I know that's a bold statement, but I've got history on my side. You see, every few years a new "trend" comes along in the industry, be it ska or Latino or grunge. Immediately, the industry exploits it, signing hordes of faceless imitators, with the objective of making the most money they can off of it, before people get so sick of it. Then the entire genre loses its credibility...at least for a while. A perfect example of this is the rush of major label signings to punk bands, after the success of Nirvana's Nevermind. On a lesser scale this has happened in the indie rock scene, led by the success of bands like Weezer, the Get Up Kids, and Saves the Day. Therefore, it should be no surprise that Drive-Thru records- a label who signed Newfound Glory in a shameless attempt to capitalize on the success of Blink 182- would jump at the Benajmins. See if this sounds familiar: Four dorky looking kids with glasses, nauseatingly cheesy lyrics about girls, and gasp...pop-punk guitar hooks. Still not convinced? Try this sample lyric, "It's just an old green couch/ but it feels like home again/ Molly Ringwald, me and you, 16 candles, lonely summers." Is this a joke? Do people really buy this crap? It's so painfully obvious that bands like The Benajmins exist merely to cash in on an already tired trend, and this band doesn't exhibit an ounce of originality on this entire album. Yes, it's well produced and the layout is pretty, but I really hope that kids will be able to see through the 'emo' facade and take this for what it really is: corporate bullshit that will eventually destroy the music industry. Lester Bangs is probably turning in his grave.... **JB**

**Benton Falls** "Fighting Starlight" (Deep Elm) CD- Believe it or not, I had a chance to sign this band a few years ago. Right after I put out the Edaline CD I saw them play with Benton Falls in the northern Bay Area and they were amazing. Although Matt from Edaline described the band as sounding like Don Caballero, I see far more similarities to a band like Mineral than anything on Touch and Go. After listening to this CD I have a few thoughts: 1) singer/guitarist, Michael Richardson, possesses a voice that is firmer, stronger, and, well, better than almost any other singer in the genre some would call "emo." 2) After the first song, the disc seems to wander. The style is kept the same throughout, and the arpeggios and wandering bass lines are amazing for a song or two, but lose me after that. There are no overarching choruses or melodies to bring everything together or make each song seem cohesive. Some might call this a good thing. I, on the other hand, think it creates a record of background music rather than the type of stuff you want to wander around town listening to on your walkman. 3) I'm glad I never signed Benton Falls. They are a very good band that has lots of poten-

tial, but that potential isn't quite realized here. Maybe in a few years.... **RS**

**Billy "The Band" (The Life)** CD- Wow, here is a band I could see falling in love with. From the unlikely location of Sioux Falls, SD, Billy plays music that would unmistakably fall into the emo category-- possibly one of the better songs on an Emo Diaries compilation-- but clearly rise above the rest. Combining beautiful guitar lines that are more technical than Mineral could ever wish, with heavy, driving choruses, and yes, overly sentimental vocals, Billy are clearly taking a tired genre and breathing some life into it. This band plays some of the most honest music I've ever heard, and after reading their lyric sheet I have a sneaking suspicion that the honesty is real and not forced. Check this out if you are or have ever been a fan of Jimmy Eat World, Sensefield, or Jejuné, but want to up the ante a bit. Great stuff. **RS**

**Blood Has Been Shed** "Novella of Uriel" (Ferret) CD- This started out promising. Not exactly original, but promising. Textbook Iron Maiden harmonies over morose clean tone melody, into a variation on the Maiden gallop thing, then violin and cello with some black metal tinge, then drama, drama, drama, a breakdown, and then pretty much Converge the rest of the way with the occasional foray back into the classical metal thing. It's a solid start, but a buildup to a let-down. The rest of the guitar lines never seem to leave open E (Or is it drop D? I wouldn't be surprised.), their foot-switches never leave the "chug" setting, and their influences never leave the "Converge, Neurosis, Overcast" setting. One song is a bagpipe solo composed and played by someone who's not even in the band, but it's nice to hear. Blood Has Been Shed is tight, but there's just not enough going on to keep me interested. If this is a novella I could have gone for a short story. Or maybe a haiku. **NT**

**Blood Red (Redwood)** CD- Blood Red offers a less Long-Island-hardcore, more rock and roll version of Silent Majority, with similar vocal stylings, breaks and a continuous energy throughout. Good lyrics and good delivery. This EP contains five tracks of competent and well-composed rock tunage. The individual songs are great, but the album as a whole gets a little repetitive at about song four. Blood Red has a full length coming out soon, which they probably got to put a lot more time into. If you're interested in checking these guys out, wait for that and don't worry so much about the EP. **AP**

**Blueline Medic** "The Apology War" (Fueled By Ramen) CD- It seems that the Melbourne trio, Blueline Medic, have mellowed out since last year's critically acclaimed (by this journalist, at least) EP, "The Apology Wars." While that EP paralleled groups like Jawbreaker or Burning Airlines, this time 'round, the group presents their more



# Death by Stereo

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# 3

sensitive side, especially on songs like the Smiths-esque, "At Least We Had the War." The most evident alteration is the lead singer's evolution: often trading his Schwarzenbachian sneer for a Morrissey-like croon, whose melancholy prose steer the songs' direction – aided by cymbal crashes and ethereal guitars. But that doesn't mean that the band doesn't still rock out from time to time; it's just done with more restraint. Blueline Medic's music has a certain magnetism to it, the chunky palm-muted guitar riffs are hypnotizing, trapping the listener in the subtleties and rich textures of the music. While this album is no "Dear You," it's still an excellent record, produced by J. Robbins, no less. If it's good enough for J., don't you owe yourself to check this out? Were you ever in Jawbox? **JB**

**Blueline Medic "A Working Title in Green" (Fueled By Ramen) CD**ep- Although Blueline Medic is from overseas, they have nailed really nailed the American indie-pop sound. This four song EP falls somewhere between Jawbreaker and Burning Airlines with that British (except they're Australian...) sneer that we all love.

All four songs here are memorable, but it's the first track "Plight" that awoke me from the monotony of generic hardcore CD's and the Different Strokes marathon on TV. I know what you're wondering, "Jonah, what's so great about this record that makes you pick it over hearing Gary Coleman's catch phrases?" I'll tell you what: great pop hooks, poetic lyrics, a huge guitar sound, and let's face it...I'm a sucker for an accent. Their website says that Blueline Medic have recently finished recording an eleven song full-length, and if these kids can jump on a tour with a better known indie band they could definitely make a dent in the American scene. Hop on the bandwagon before it runs you over. **JB**

**Bombshell Rocks "City Rats and Alleycats" (Burning Heart) CD**- So, it appears that those folks over at Epitaph really like the way Rancid sounds... a lot. Enough to sign up Bombshell Rocks, a Swedish band who probably spent a lot of time listening to Rancid. This CD will fit in neatly in your collection between your Rancid albums and the Swingin Utters' "Juvenile Product." That said, it's pretty fucking good. It has that wonderful Clash-esque street punk sound, but played in a melodic/pop way. On the song "Unstoppable," this Swedish band even pulls out some twangy guitar riffs for a country sound. Once again, this is nothing groundbreaking, but hey, not much is these days. As the name suggests, this band Rocks. **AT**

**Bonny Billy "More Revery" (Temporary Residence Ltd.) CD**ep- Don't be misled by the name – Bonny Billy is none other than the lord of the cranky alt-country anthem, Mr. William Oldham, who has, under both his own

name and the moniker Palace, put out some of the most beautifully melancholy music this side of the Mississippi and earned himself a dedicated following along the way. This six-song EP proves that in addition to making disjointedly heartbreaking music of his own, Oldham is also capable of giving his own touch to the music of others. The songs he covers here aren't particularly well-known for the most part – PJ Harvey's "Sweeter Than Anything" and Tim McGraw's "Just to See You Smile" are the only two this admittedly under-educated reviewer had heard of – but the fact that they emanate from a different creative source sets them apart from Oldham's original material. But this is still classic Oldham – perhaps a little bit less morbid this time around, but only by a very small margin. And every bit as enchanting and sad. **DF**

**Bottles and Skulls "Never Kiss the Wasp" (Cheetah/EI Distorto) CD**- I'm hardly a big fan of the new "rock and roll" revival that seems to have affected our nation's hipsters like a deadly plague, but every once in a while I'll find a band that possesses so much snarling attitude and drunken bravado that I'm not afraid to rock out with my cock out, metaphorically speaking. Bottles and Skulls have raw attitude in spades, and their sound is loud, raw, and unrelenting. Plus they're cool enough to continue the MC5's tradition of shouting "motherfucker" in the middle of their songs. These guys make the Hellcoasters look like little flower-picking sissy girls, and they can play their instruments too! **DF**

**Boris the Sprinkler "...Gay!" (Go Kart) CD**- More goofiness from the reigning preacher of pop punk gospel: the Reverend Norb. Opening with three questions: #1: "What is your name?" #2: "What is your quest?" and #3: "Motherfucker are you ready to rock?" as they dive headlong into the first song. This album is more of the same from BtS, and once again, they walk the thin line between entertainment and annoyance. It's not quite as good as the last album "Suck!", but still fun. My biggest qualm on here is that the song "I Don't Really Want To Walk To Taco Bell Without You," on which Norb claims credit for the music, is just a rockin' version of "American Music" by the Violent Femmes. He picked a good song to rip off, and it's the best track on "Gay!", but just give credit where credit's due, especially when it's this obvious. If you've heard Boris before, you probably think they're pretty entertaining or annoying as they definitely walk the line. **AT**

**Bouncing Souls "How I Spent My Summer Vacation" (Epitaph) CD**- In the ten years since their inception, it seems that the Bouncing Souls, much like label mates Bad Religion, have reduced the construction of great punk songs down to a science. Here's the equation: three chords, a galloping drum beat, Greg's unique have half-spoken and half-sung vocals, a great hook, and repeat. While this album still isn't the second coming of "Maniacal Laughter" that I've been waiting for, it's still much more consistent than their last few efforts. Through years of touring and writing the Bouncing Souls have carved their own distinct niche in the punk rock community and love 'em or hate 'em, they've proved that they're here to stay. Honestly, between Greg's poignant narratives, charged sing-alongs, and even the occasional "oi" chant here and there for good measure, there isn't really much not to like with "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." It looks like the Bouncing Souls are back on top and I have a feeling they're going to be there for awhile. **JB**

**Bratmobile "Ladies, Women and Girls" (Lookout!) CD**- Bratmobile's first new album since their reunion, and it's more or less the same old thing. They've still got the sassy vocal stylings of Allison Wolfe and that stripped down Olympia sound of a six string and drums, although this time they've added a bass and additional instrumentation for several songs. Better production gives "Ladies..." a slightly cleaner and more complex sound than their previous efforts. The song "Gimme Brains" has a catchy sing-along chorus replete with hand claps that'll have you up and pogoing around your room. **AT**

**Break of Dawn "Figure Studies in Arsenic and Tears" (One Day Savior) CD**- What the hell happened to this band? It seems only yesterday that I was watching this group of stary eyed Rochesterians (no, not rastafarians, people from Rochester) rock a community center with Cave-In on their "Until Your Heart Stops" tour. Even then, it was remarkable how many kids were going off to BOD. So here we are, a few years and line-up changes later, and this band has transformed from playing in Cave-In's shadow to being one of the most brutal new acts this side of the Mason Dixon line. Converge is an obvious comparison for BOD, but believe or not, BOD is much more complex. In sections rivaling The Dillinger Escape plan, the double bass rumbles, the guitars play intricate speed-picking harmonies, and the guttural vocals sound like Satan himself has possessed the lead singer. Just when you've been pummeled into near submission, they switch to one of those clean parts where the guitars back off and the singer does a spoken word thing that sounds like it's being filtered through answering machine. Then back to the metal. A cliched combination? Normally I would agree, but Break of Dawn's music has enough style and originality to fend off the typical monotony of this genre. Alongside Poison the Well, this is the best metal I've heard since the last Iron Maiden album; and that's a monumental complement coming from Jonah Bayer. **JB**

**Brother's Keeper "Fantasy Killer" (Trust-kill) CD**- I think every zine has a few bands they love to make fun of. Muddle has Shades Apart, Punk Planet has, well, all punk bands, and we have Face to Face and the Brother's Keeper. It's not that we don't like Brother's Keeper, it's just that Jason Murphy-- who has reviewed all BK releases for LOI thus far-- doesn't like them. And possibly with good reason: in the past, Mike Ski, their amazingly nice singer, had a pretty bad voice to say the least and their instrumentation was tight and thick but nothing at all different. I think Jason should check out this release, because-- I never thought I'd say this-- Brother's Keeper has put out a wonderful record with this release. If every band has their opus magnum then this is it for Brother's Keeper. Not only has Mike Ski found a happy medium between shouting and singing which actually allows him to be taken seriously, but the guitars parts are relentless. I'm thinking Snapcase meets DC hardcore in a way that shuns the metal much of the hardcore scene embraces these days. This is good stuff, and I have been waiting for an excuse to say that about BK for a while. Well, my friends, I've found one. **RS**

**Burning Airlines "Identikit" (DeSoto) CD**- By now you all know that Burning Airlines is headed up by ex-Jawboxer and producer extraordinaire, J. "I Know What You Did Last Summer" Robbins. What you might not know is how much this band has evolved since their last full-length, "Mission:Control!" Mr. Robbins' guitar and voice imitate each other with quirky revelations and off-the-wall phrasing; and the feedback-drenched harmonies reveal countless layers of sonic heaven embedded in the fuzz. The guitar playing isn't perfect-- on its own it wouldn't be nearly as evocative-- but when paired with the meandering basslines of Mike Harbin, and all-over-the-place drumming courtesy of Peter Moffett, it's pure magic. The songs are more breathable this time around; tricky production techniques don't define the music, they complement its strengths. Burning Airlines has managed to do something that not many bands can do in today's musical climate: create their own distinct sound that defies comparison. When's the sequel? **JB**

**Burnman "Notes For a Catalogue For an Exhibition" (No Idea) CD**- I was wrong about Burnman. You see, the first time I listened to this I was studying my class schedule and didn't pay full attention to the music, which led me to write them off as a second-rate Coalesce. Then about a week later, for reasons unknown, I decided to dig out this CD and give it another listen, and I can't believe this is the same CD I mindlessly threw in the "used CD stores won't even take this crap" pile. Burnman may be heavy, but they're anything but second-rate. Their songs have a sharp technical edge to them: guitars zigzag with odd rhythms building crescendo after crescendo over a bed of blistering metal noise. Yet somehow, transitions to perfectly orchestrated 4/4 breakdowns are executed without a hint of awkwardness. The drummer is also amazing, playing beats that sound like they are off tempo, but upon further inspection are right on beat with some type of internal metronome. And can you actually understand what the singer is saying? What a novel idea. I was trying to think of a moral for this review; a greater lesson learned for me to pass on to you, the reader. "You can't always judge a book by its cover?" No, in fact the No Idea nerds have outdone themselves the artsy layout. "All's fair in love in war?" No, that has nothing to do with this review. Finally, I settled on "If at first you don't succeed, try again." Hey, it worked for me. **JB**

**Burnt By The Sun (Relapse) CD**ep- Think positive, think positive, think positive. I think that the small essay on the recent WTO/World Bank protests in the sleeve for this record was thought provoking and well written; it should be noted that he doesn't offer any solutions, but then again, when was that his job? Hmm, what else is positive about this... oh, I didn't cut myself on the insert? Screw it. I have a certain level of tolerance for testosterone-fueled metal/hardcore bands with vague yet dark and dismal lyrics. Unfortunately, it stretched my patience several years ago, meaning this band does not make the cut today. **JM**

**Burnt by the Sun / Ludditeclone (Ferret) CD**- These are two different bands? Could have fooled me. Maybe it was because I used



4

this as background music for layout work a few days running, or maybe it was because I turned the volume low so as not to scare my neighbors, but this sounds

like one band playing 6 six grindcore jams filled with technical guitars and diesel drum beats at break neck speed. No, this can't be two different bands? They sound exactly alike! Oh well, I'll trust the liner notes. Anyways, both these bands are on Relapse and I'm sure people that like stuff like Dillinger Escape Plan or even Brutal Truth will like this. I, however, find there to be more banging than musicianship here. It's not bad, it's just not my thing. And I seriously hope I never get caught in a Burntbythesun mosh pit or it's asskicked city for me. **RS**

**The Business "No Mercy For You" (Burning Heart/Epitaph) CD-** The Business, if you're not familiar with them, are one of the best and longest standing second-wave of UK punk (some say Oi) bands. They were also one of the first to make the rounds on the "reunited" circuit in the 90's. I recall when they played their first American show back in 1994 in NYC- a legendary show that saw coverage in the long-gone Skinhead Times. I'm still not quite sure how they do it, because they're obviously a very active act of older guys, but The Business still manages to pull it together when crafting new material. This album certainly boasts their formula of catchy tough streetpunk, but there are certainly places where this near-original lineup comes close to matching their initial intensity and genius. The lead track, "Takers & Users" dive bombs into a guitar line and Clashy chopiness that's pure Oi glory. Micky Fitz still maintains one of the most apt voices for the style- an almost fibrous growl with just enough sneering high end to remain unique. But this rugged blue-collar rasp can wrap itself around a harmony like few others. This diminutive old Brit can sing. "Guinness Boys" has a bit of the old Frankie Flame piano-accompanied-drinking-song chorus, but it's not that notable otherwise. "Hate K.D." is a faster and harder affair that seems to mix the more thug Oi sound of 1984 England with the density of some of the hardcore acts that The Business tour with. But by the title track it seems that the band was just warming up- now here's a great Business song. "Always" is also a worthwhile track but as you might expect, this is just a postcard from an act that needs to be experienced live. Fans will appreciate but beginners should grab an early album or a collection. **dup**

**Cadillac Blindside "The Allegory of Death and Fame" (Fueled by Raman) CD-** In my limited readings of Plato, I remember the Allegory of the Cave which many credit to setting a stage for the modern metaphor. But, I don't think I got to the Allegory of Death and Fame in my classical studies. Perhaps I need to move onto Aristotle. Whatever the case may be, we have Minnesota's Cadillac Blindside giving us their second release. 6 songs of catchy, inspired emo-pop. Unlike the droves of other bands who try this style, Cadillac Blindside do it with such grace and skill that they leave many of those that came before them struggling in their wake. Whether it's the beautifully textured guitar lines or the pounding drums found in each and every song I've ever heard the Caddy play, they never cease to impress. While some may find the vocals annoying-

in that they lack the geekiness or polish of so many other emo bands- I find them endearing and honest. I'm not sure if these 6 songs surpass their first full length on Soda Jerk last year, which was nothing short of amazing, but it comes close. This is a keeper from start to finish. **RS**

**Calexico "Even My Sure Things Fall Through" (Quarterstick) CDep-** This EP may seem like a waste of money since it's a re-release of European B-sides and remixes and includes 3 music videos (which you can find online if you search hard enough). Though if you do end up with this platter you might be surprised. This is a good intro to Calexico, a Tucson based trio who mix just enough country with jazz fusion to make it interesting. Joey Burns' vocals on "Crystal Frontier" are reminiscent of the soundtracks from John Ford westerns where John Wayne would traverse countless deserts to arrive home safely. John Conertino plays drums like a drum-machine on morphine while Jacob Valenzuela interjects quiet trumpet blasts. Home on the range, or home on your range, you'll definitely want to fire up this dish. **JBC**

**Cause for Alarm "Nothing Ever Dies 1982-1999" (Victory) CD-** I was born in 1979, which means that I was three years old when Cause for Alarm started making the hardcore music. At such an age, I lacked the capacity to rationally critique even the simplest of asinine statements, such as "Nothing Ever Dies". What can that possibly mean to a band with song titles so blatant as "United Races" and "Time to Try". Do they mean that every living and non-living thing, through physical and extra-physical interaction affects, and is affected by, it's environment, and therefore is metaphysically engrained into our idea of eternity as it is manifested by tangible objects throughout time? Do they mean that the idea of "nothing" is "ever-dying" because as soon as one conceives of "nothing" it becomes an idea of "nothing" and ceases to actually be "nothing"? No. They do not. They just made a mistake. The point is, if you were a fan of Cause for Alarm in the early 80s, then you will buy this for sentimental reasons, and if you started listening to hardcore in the 90s, then you will probably not buy this CD because it is boring and old. Unless you are really into history, or the immortal. **AP**

**Cell Block 5 "Push It" (Industrial Strength) CD-** These guys are a local Bay Area punk rock group who play straight ahead punk rock. They have an impressive array of guests, from He Who Cannot Be Named from the Dwarves on guitar, Chris Freeman from Pansy Division doing some background vox, and East Bay Ray from the Dead Kennedys playing some guitar and producing and mastering. In the punk rock tradition, they sing songs about cars and fighting, with snotty vocals and wailing guitar solos. This is your standard fist shaking punk. Nothing more, nothing less. **AT**

**Choking Victim "Crack Rock Steady/Squatta's Paradise" (Tent City) CD-** This CD is confusing. First, it contains an EP called "Crack Rock Steady." Then, it contains Choking Victim's half of a split with Squatta's Paradise, but it does not contain Squatta's Paradise's music, but it does say "Squatta's Paradise" on the cover. See why that's confusing? Also, it's fun to say "Squatta's Paradise". These are ska/punk songs ala Operation Ivy, with a bit more irreverence, good energy, and lighthearted political lyrics. The recording is okay, kind of

old school sounding, and it carries well the mood of the songs. The vocals are alright, a bit of yelling and some off-key singing. I guess once you know that Choking Victim sounds like Op Ivy, there's not a whole lot more to say. Except maybe "Squatta's Paradise". **AP**

**Christiansen "Emphasizing Function Over Design (Eulogy) CD-** In case you were wondering, I don't think Christiansen is a religious band; at least they don't thank any sort of higher power in the credits. If they are, I'm guessing the big guy is going to be pretty pissed. Christiansen also isn't your typical Eulogy band. In fact I'm sure the kids in Uneath or Trust No One could really give these emo saplings something to cry about. Obligatory whiny emo references aside, this band is actually much more than a second-rate Get Up Kids. They remind me of Boy Sets Fire minus the hardcore tendencies, but with the same sense of urgency. Christiansen have the balls to tread ground often avoided by emo bands: less formulaic melodies, strange time signatures, and even the occasional metal riff or futuristic guitar effect; and it's these quirks that ultimately separate Christiansen from their bespectacled peers. Christiansen does take the easy way out from time to time, letting the cheesiness get the best of them, especially lyrically. But overall, this is an extremely dynamic record, and with Robby Scott from By the Grace of God as a new addition to the group, you can't afford not to check this band out. **JB**

**Cock Sparrer "Live: Running Riot Across The U.S.A." (TKO) CD-** Yes! The most under-respected punk band of all time celebrates their first American tour with 19 tracks from SF and NY. Consider that Sparrer was formed somewhere between 1972 and 1974 in the UK and told that they were too old when all the UK labels were jumping on the punk bandwagon by the end of the decade. Few too people outside the Oi community (where an underdog always gets respect) know that this act is one of the few testaments to real life-long punk spirit and impeccable honest catchy streetpunk songs. When I witnessed these nearly-50-year-old balding men take the stage and shred like teenagers, it all made sense. Listening to the crowds singing every word on this record only helps cement the legacy that belongs to them. The sound here is a bit raw, but it fits them well. The recording on the bulk of this band's classic records is very clean, so that extra energy helps the effort. For the uninitiated, their immortal first album "Shock Troops" is worth whatever they charge for it these days. This record is very good, and doesn't miss any of their many classics but it's got a bit of a hardcore fan edge to it. But, the more Sparrer on the racks the better. Carry on Oi. **dup**

**Counterfit "From Finish to Starting Line" (Negative Progression) CDep-** Where was this band 4 years ago? They've got the melodic breakdowns, the heavy/catchy choruses, and a singer who would be right at home in a top-40 band. The only thing they don't have is anything new. Bands like Piebald (ironically enough one of the Counterfit guys is wearing a Piebald shirt in the promo photo), Jimmy Eat World, and even the Promise Ring have been playing this type of melodicore for a long time. Don't get me wrong, this band is good and I'm sure there are more than enough kids who will love this... even if they are a few years too late. **RS**

**Countervail (Status) CDep-** While few hardcore bands these days realize that it doesn't take lightning fast guitar riffs or stop-on-a-dime technical accuracy to be powerful, much less unique,

Countervail is fully cognizant of this. The secret track of their two guitarists shredding more than adequately shows that these SoCal kids are more than a match for any of the Iron Maiden/Slayer wannabes out there, the band prefers to take a simpler approach. They play hardcore along the lines of Unbroken meets Converge that is heavy on the grooves and melody in an undeniably powerful way. It's so good, actually, that I asked them to do their next full length with me (they politely declined). Honestly I wasn't into their last record on New Age, "Most Abused Word," as it just seemed a bit too manic-- and there was a distinct Coalesce feel that was too much for comfort-- but here the band shows a more controlled sound using very precise riffage and aptly timed cymbal taps before launching into a sonic assault. While their new drummer, Seth Brown of Status fame, is tight and steady he really doesn't live up to that last dude they had who was a drumming maniac. Nonetheless, this is one of the few bands these days that is unmistakably hardcore without the pomp and circumstance of metal. Very good stuff. **RS**

**Crushstory "A+ Electric" (Pop Kid) CD-** Upon my first listen to "A+ Electric" I wasn't particularly impressed, but after my first few exposures to the album, its simple, charming sense of fun has begun to rub off on me. Like the Rentals without the kitsch-factor or Apples in Stereo minus the faux-psychedelics, Crushstory plays simple, bouncy pop songs punctuated by keyboards and horns. There's a feeling of innocent playfulness to their music that makes it fun, albeit insubstantial. **DF**

**Cursive "Burst and Bloom" (Saddle Creek) CD-** I know that this next sentence is going to get me in trouble, and next issue's "letters" section will probably be loaded with people telling me how wrong I am, but I'm going to write it anyway. Here it goes...Cursive is the independent music scene's answer to Radiohead. Not in the sense that they sound like Radiohead or even the assumption that they are trying to sound like Radiohead. They are merely pushing the boundaries of creativity and songwriting and aren't afraid to stomp on their roots- much like their overseas counterparts. Tim Kasher just seems to get better and better with each release, and the addition of a full time cello player is in no way a novelty but adds a whole new dynamic to the music. Cursive isn't afraid to try new things in the relatively stale indie scene, like their British kindred spirits and their new EP is 22 minutes of sheer perfection. The song structures are explosive- cello crescendos give way to reverb-laden guitar bursts as Tim Kasher's quite whisper erupts into swelling cries- and back again in a remarkably cohesive way. But that's not it. The songs are so painstakingly textured that literally every time you listen to this you will hear a new barely audible guitar track or sequencer, and I've prob-



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5

ably listened to this at least 30 times. This is the best record I've received this issue-and will probably cost you as much as parking at a Radiohead show- so do yourself a favor and buy this EP. As Mr. Kasher states in the songs opening track 'Sink to the Beat': "Some melodies are like disease...they will infect your memory." Well consider me infected and if Cur-sive's new full length is anywhere near as brilliant as this EP, I'm betting you will be too. **JB**

**Dakota Suite "Signal Hill" (Badman) CD-** From the same stellar label what brung you former Red House Painter Mark Kozelek's last record comes this- a new project with Richard Formy of Spectrum (a band formed by a member of the famed Spacemen 3). But that's not really as important as the sticker on the front would let you think. This act is better lumped into the field of 'insurgent' country, or better yet Americana- I just don't wanna use that word for a band based in Leeds, England. Semantics aside, this is one of the most effective exercises in subtlety I've experienced of late- elegant, minimal and stunning material throughout. It's what you should expect from this- dark, miserable and soothing sub-country tunes. Dakota Suite's soft instrumentation exudes grace and melancholy simultaneously- something only the best artists can do, deconstruct the roots of country. I'd compare them to The Willard Grant Conspiracy but with a hint of ambient moodiness instead of WGC's bitter mourning. The vocals have a silken texture to them, barely hiding a touch of accent- the wrong one for this style but no matter. For Brits working in the field of a very American style, this is outstanding. **dup**

**Darker Day Tomorrow "No Sleep in Forty Days" (Redstar) CD-** Remember when Syracuse mattered? These guys do. So well, in fact, that they are "keepin' it real" by playing songs that were written in that very city in 1990. Thank you! Most of us had forgotten what upstate New York hardcore sounded like. Now, we are reminded of such time-honored traditions as drop-D, growling vocals, words like "turmoil", and sounds like "Junt, Junt, Ju-Ju-Junt". It's good to be back. **AP**

**The Dashboard Confessionals "The Places You Have Come to Fear the Most" (Vagrant) CD-** Chris Carraba, former singer of Further Seems Forever brings us his second solo full-length on Vagrant Records. I had heard his 3 song EP on Fiddler a few months back and was quite impressed by that song "Drowning." Tear-jerking yet sincere, cheesey yet pretty, moody yet pensive. And here we have a record that from what my contacts have told me sold around 12,000 copies in the first 6 weeks of its release. Which is weird, 'cause I saw this band open for none other than Snap-case, H2O, and Face to

Face, and I can tell you every kid in the place was really confused at the quiet acoustic pop that was coming from the speakers. It didn't help that most of the kids at the show were 16 (i.e. they were still straightedge) and The Dashboard Confessionals are truly a cry-in-your-beer band if I've ever heard one. Hell, Chris even sings the lyric "this new diet's liquid" on one song, I wonder what that could mean. But, I guess Vagrant's gamble is paying off and then some because the kids are eating this up. I'm not quite sure if it's my thing. I tend to like subtlety in my music- no matter if that music is metal or country- and there is very little subtlety here. What you see is what you get. He's no Elliott Smith, but I could see college girls all over the country going absolutely ga-ga over this. **RS**

**Death on Wednesday "Buying the Lie" (Sidecho) CD-** The first thing that hits me is how much this reminds me of Youth Brigade. I guess that's not fair, as it's primarily the lead singer's voice that got me on this track. It's still punk rock in a melodic vein, which is also not too far from Youth Brigade, though Death on Wednesday lacks the bite that Youth Brigade had. I guess the nicest things I can say is that it did not put me to sleep (much), I enjoyed the lyrics and their political leanings, and the layout was quite nice. Translation: not bad, but I'll pass. **JM**

**December's January "Adventures in Rhoton" (Aisle 2) CD-** We've all heard this before, a not very innovative mix of the Get Up Kids and what emo sounded like before it was pop-punk. There are rock parts and slow melody parts. There's singing, there's whispering. There are lyrics. Oh yes, there are lyrics. Being sad. Wanting to go back to an earlier, more innocent time. Seeing friends you haven't seen in a while. Caring. Swinging on the swings. The songs are okay, minus the words, but this kind of vocal melody is supposed to be catchy and memorable. The one interesting song is called Singapore Sling. The lyrics, according to the lyrics sheet, are just the mixing instructions for the drink of the same name, but it's whispered and you can't tell. There's a flugelhorn. That's cool in my book. **NT**

**De La Hoya "DANCE! Techno Mega-Mix #42 (Red Leader) CD-** De La Hoya undoubtedly wins my award this issue for "the most underrated punk band, who should be selling out arenas instead of cutesy MTV punk bands rehashing the same three chords and snappy choruses." De La Hoya isn't about image, they are about the music and their sincerity shines through on their latest (albeit misleadingly titled) album "DANCE! Techno Mega-Mix #42." Musically this album is top notch, meticulously blending De La Hoya's own brand of Fat Wreck tinged punk rock with hardcore and emo influences, complex time changes, and soaring melodies. Oh yeah, De La Hoya is smart too- with a hint of cynicism. Sample lyric: "You see a rally of the protest groups, to fight the evil of the suits or just here for new recruits?" Conclusion: Punk rock can still be vital, intelligent, and catchy as hell- buy this record. Now. **JB**

**Diecast "Day of Reckoning" (Now or Never) CD-** Have you noticed that many hardline hardcore bands these days have very Puritan values? Spouting rhetoric along the lines of "your society is corrupt, we don't live like you 'cause we're better, God will punish you heathens in hell..." without the God stuff, of course (you thought it couldn't get any worse?). So, it only makes sense

that the newest member of John Winthrop's crew would be from the colony he helped create a few hundred years ago: Boston. Diecast are the most forgettable, unthreatening, borderline-ridiculous, run-of-the-mill hardcore band I've heard in a long time. It's along the lines of One King Down's full length (not their EPs, mind you), except One King Down actually were kind of scary. Um, maybe Diecast would be taken a bit more seriously if they dropped the melodic harmony choruses and breakdowns. If you're gonna be hard, stay hard, don't wimp it up with melodicism. Other than the impressive guitar tone, which is think as molasses, this truly sucks. I feel dumber just having listened to this. **RS**

**Diesel Boy "Road Hard and Put Away Wet" CD-** It's good to see Diesel Boy is still at it. I really like them, and shocked and dismayed every time I tell someone this band is a guilty pleasure of mine and they look at me in horror before walking away muttering under their breath. I don't care what anyone says, their second record "Venus Envy" is a lyrical masterpiece on the level of "Less Talk, More Rock" by Propagandhi (without the politics, of course), "Revolver" by the Beatles (but far less psychedelic), and "Dr. Feelgood" by Motley Crue. Dave Lake has mastered the art of the silly pop-song, while at the same time managing to sound completely dead-pan serious about his topics of choice. Who else could write a power ballad about Kate Hudson and make it sound like the most beautiful thing since "The Ballad of Jane" by LA Guns? Who else could talk about snorting coke off Gwen Stefani's ass and make you realize that you've fantasized about that too? Who else manages to incorporate sex into every single song he writes, even if that song is about emo-boys? This stuff is tight, catchy, and fun- real fun. So what if no one gets it but me. Loosen up punk rock world! **RS**

**Digger "Trainwreck" (Hopeless) CD-** Dep-Damn!t, hasn't this band broken up yet? Just when you thought you couldn't get too much of a good thing, well, you can. Digger's last record wasn't on par with their better work, notably their wonderful east-coast style pop-punk record "Promise of an Uncertain Future", and this CD, while good, gets old by the second listen. It just sounds exactly like the same band I had such a soft spot for a few years ago, except the songs here are virtual carbon copies of the songs then. While every tune is solid, I think this is a case of "Hopeless is contractually obligated to put out all our records so here you go." I guess it wouldn't be so bad if this stuff weren't so similar to their older stuff. What I'm trying to say is that Digger hasn't grown at all in their 3.5 record career, and I'd really like to see them grow up before I start singing their praises again. Not bad, just nothing new. **RS**

**Down By Law/Pseudo Heroes (Theologian) CD-** Two bands of melodic head bopping punk. Down By Law's half are five of the best songs ever! The only thing is that they were better when The Who, AC/DC, The Clash, Cheap Trick, and Lynyrd Skynyrd first did them. They do a pretty good job of butchering Cheap Trick's "Surrender" with a live recording where the singer can't quite handle hitting the high notes. I don't have any problem with cover songs, or even cover albums, especially ones as done as well as these, but please do something

with the song! Down By Law just goes through the songs in the same way that the original band played them. Pass up their side and just buy the originals if you want to hear originality. Pseudo Heroes on the other hand play pretty good melodic punk of the southern California persuasion. They are nothing special, and are certainly not doing anything new, but they're good enough to warrant checking out if you're into that sorta thing. **AT**

**Dropkick Murphys "Sing Loud Sing Proud" (Helicat/Epitaph) CD-** Amazing. This act just gets bigger, both in head count and popularity. Talk about a band that can appeal to both skinheads and parents alike (it helps if your parents have names like Maureen and Patrick). The everyday beating over the head by the Irish-pride stick that I get here in Boston would normally negate this stuff immediately, but the Dropkicks have so much fuckin' heart it's tough not to like them. This town has had a lot of great bands fizzle so it's always to see an act as strong as The Dropkicks doing so well. But whereas the tough tracks are still here, there's something about the insistent bagpipes that makes these sturdy anthems a little too whimsical. This is PUNK, remember? Irish rebel tunes and rowdy streetpunk do have a lot in common but the recent inclusion of tin whistle and mandolin to the permanent lineup feels a little strange. I mean, what's next for these guys- an album of Chieftains covers done Oi-style? It's still the same band (more or less) but I think I'd prefer to listen to their other albums and the great singles comp that came out last year. Perhaps some of the blame here lies in the fact that Lars is not behind the desk for this one. Fans might be split over this release, but their appeal should range farther than ever now. That's not all bad. **dup**

**The Drunks "Ruin It For Everyone" (Flat/TKO) CD-** Do The Drunks want me to care about them? If so, I am inclined to inquire of them: "Dudes, why?" It seems to me that The Drunks were very preoccupied while writing this album, like they had to hurry up and finish these songs so that they could go pick up their tax returns or take back a library book on time. It could be that The Drunks spent so much time living up to their name that they forgot they were a band until a couple nights before their scheduled recording time, so one Drunk said, "Hey, dude, remember Rancid?" and another Drunk said, "Only the boring parts." And then they wrote this album, "Ruin It For Everyone," which magically inspires both boredom and pity simultaneously. **AP**

**Dynamite Boy "Somewhere in America" (Fearless) CD-** I guess the challenge of pop punk, since for some reason these artists feel confined to one time-signature and about five chords, is perfecting that "I'm having emotional fun" sound. Dynamite Boy can be proud, because they are so close. Here is a collection of heartfelt lyrics about personal struggle and how hard it can be to grow up in a wealthy California suburb, set to music that is in 4/4 time and uses all five of the pre-approved pop punk chords. Plus...what album is complete without a gut-wrenching



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array of predictable and monotonous harmonies?! You would think that "monotonous harmonies" would be impossible, an oxymoron as it were,

but somehow, in addition to perfecting the soundtrack to emotional fun, Dynamite Boy has also invented such a musical entity. Buy this album, if only to experience the ingenuity and theoretical genius of these young but masterful musicians. **AP**

**Earth Crisis "Last of the Sane" (Victory) CD-** I want to find the person that told Karl Buechner that he could sing, as they obviously need a thrashing or a hearing check (maybe both). Anyway, this is a collection of covers, songs from compilations, and live tracks, meaning that it's thrown together with very little regard to an overall album flow. For me, it is nice to have "The Order" on CD and some of the covers are not without their charm (the Misfits' "Earth AD" and the Dead Kennedys' "Holiday in Cambodia" in particular), but what this CD mostly says is that the band is through (they just played their last show recently) and this is their way of tying up loose ends. It also shows how far from grace this band has fallen, with the most interesting songs being the ones recorded in 1996. Make no doubt, I will miss a band that has seriously rocked me several times live and has created some quality music, but I also realize that I lost interest about 4 years and 3 records ago. **JM**

**Eighteen Visions "The Best Of" (Trustkill) CD-** These guys have left themselves wide open. First, they named this release "The Best of Eighteen Visions", a perfect setup for lines such as "If this is the best, I'd sure hate to hear the worst!" or "If this is the best they can do, I feel sorry for them!" or "Man, this CD really sucks!" Also, they decided to define their musical status by claiming "We are rock and roll kids playing metal music in a hardcore band", which prompts such retorts as "We are trendy kids playing trendy music in a shitty band" or "We play generic music but still really like to talk about ourselves as if we did something new and/or interesting". In addition, Eighteen Visions likes to pose, big time. Like there's this one picture where a guy has lifted his arm up by his head so that you can be sure to see his super-cool tats. Way subtle dude. Anyway, kids like this band for some reason, but it's generic new school hardcore fueled by empty anger, monotonous vocals and boring guitar parts. The layout is the worst ever. **AP**

**Eleventeen "Everything I've Ever Wated to Say" (Frenetic) CD-** Let's be honest here: Eleventeen are headed for big things. They have that melodic pop-punk thing going that has worked wonders for bands like the Getup Kids, Saves the Day, and the Movielife; I imagine they're pretty good looking dudes; and they're from a very vibrant scene (the Bay Area) which will afford them the opportunity to get lots of exposure. But, if you ask me under oath if I think that Eleventeen are doing anything that a bunch of other bands aren't doing just as well, well your honor, I would have to say the answer is most certainly not. But, there is an earnestness in Eleventeen not often found in most bands in the genre. Be it the pleasantly rough recording quality or the sense of excitement about their music and future career that I gather from this record's title, it

is clear that Eleventeen are doing this for the right reasons and at least (for now) do not have their sights set on MTV. But, with a little luck and the right backing this band could be huge and we could have another teen sensation on our hands. **RS**

**Enemies/Pitch Black (Lookout!) CD-** This isn't the first split CD that Lookout! has released in recent years; it hasn't been all that long since the Potatomen/Cub split or the Smugglers/Hi-Fives split, and there may even be some others that I'm forgetting at the moment. This full-length CD, however, bears much more of a resemblance to the near-legendary Blatz/Filth "Shit Split" double CD that the label released quite a few years earlier (and re-released recently). Perhaps this release is indicative of the direction Lookout! is taking for the new millennium: harder-edged punk rock that disposes of any excessive poppiness in favor of darker, AFI-esque material. Pitch Black have a slight edge over Enemies here, if only because their brand of speedy punk is a bit more immediate and aggressive than that of the Enemies, who fall back on recycled Pinhead Gunpowder tricks a few too many times for my liking. **DF**

**Eskimo Kisses (Post-Parlo) CDep-** I listen to a wide range of music (from the coolest jazz to the harshest noise), but sometimes all I really need is good pop music. A catchy melody, a driving beat, maybe a little rock to get a little crunch in the mix, and most of all, a comfortable feeling like you've known a tune for a while. And while they are not as twee as their name implies, Eskimo Kisses can write a good pop song (actually, quite a few). This is a band that has snared me with this all too short release, leaving me wanting more. Just don't tell anyone about the pop thing, my indie cred card has mucho stamps on it these days.... **JM**

**Even Johansen "Quiet and Still" (FiveOne) CD-** Picture Thom Yorke if he wasn't a genius. Then picture him doing a solo album, right after The Bends, before he got so much into electronics. Still dark, and still some keyboards and atmosphere, but poppier, less artsy. Then picture him with mediocre lyrics, and marginally reduced vocal capabilities. And an acoustic guitar, less rock. And his heart in the right place. Picture him from Norway. With a pretty decent cover of "Dancin' in the Moonlight" by Thin Lizzy, but not as good as the one Smashing Pumpkins did. Picture me taking this CD out, and putting in a Radiohead CD. Picture me much much happier. **NT**

**Every Time I Die "Last Night in Town" (Ferret) CD-** It is a good record! If you are "in" the hardcore "scene", you probably have or have heard this album. If you haven't heard it, you might want to ask yourself "Am I actually 'in' the 'scene'?" If you are "out" of the "scene" and trying to get "in", this might be a good catalyst. Every Time I Die offers an action-packed and brilliantly produced performance characterized by the thickest guitars known to hardcore and a diverse and dynamic repertoire of original and aggressive riffs and breaks. Last Night is punctuated by an original screamy vocal style and an apparent (but controlled) sense of humor. Highlights are tracks four and eight, where some good singing happens, and the band pulls you to the edge of your seat to wait through samples and feedback for what promises to be an appointing delivery. **AP**

**The Ex "Dizzy Spells" (Touch and Go) CD-** I've been hearing a lot about this band for a few years now but for some reason I never checked them out. And, I'm sorry I never did because this is truly something different. As a matter of fact for any other band I would say this rag-tag mish-mosh of sounds, timbres, and rhythms would be a magnum opus, or what have you. But, a quick check on the internet yields the information that this band has been around for quite some time, spouting their anarchist cries all over the globe. In the mix we get jagged drum-bass interplay that goes everywhere from Clash territory, to Devo-esque charades, to Talking Heads playfulness. An onslaught of guitars playing dissonant chords from the nether-regions of their amps lays low in the mix while the drummer pounds his way all over the place-- sometimes going so far as to create hits that sound like he would rather beat the hell out of the stands that hold the cymbals rather than the cymbals themselves. And, the vocals, reminiscent-- but not derivative-- of D. Boon of the Minutemen, cover ground like Hollywood's trash to the co-option of fast-food culture to a guy named Burson Marsteller who it seems has done some pretty awful things in the name of corporate image protection. This is so good and is not to be taken lightly. This band will not appeal to everyone, even people who might be quite in line with The Ex's political views might be caught off guard by this work of true art. I, on the other hand, find this riveting and hold it to be the biggest surprise since, well, I popped a CD by a little known band called At the Drive-in into my stereo. But, I think it's safe to say that The Ex will never ever become nearly as successful as ATDI, and I'm sure they wouldn't want to be anyway. This is haunting. **RS**

**The Exit "Sing Four Favorites" (Downright) CD-** Does it ever bother you when restaurants or stores claim to be famous? What criteria are they basing this statement on? It's usually always the quasi-sketchy places that include "famous" in their names; it's usually some last ditched effort to catch the public's eye. The Exit are also barking up the same tree by labeling these songs someone's "favorites". Sorry, but they are not mine. For one thing, this band is trying to pull off reggae beats mixed with punk rock, with the results not hitting their stride. Not only that, but there is a bored quality about this band that puts me off; it's almost like they don't want to put the effort in to really excite the audience. If they don't want to bother showing up, why should I? **JM**

**Fabulous Disaster "Put Out or Get Out" (Pink and Black) CD-** The Fat Wreck camp is expanding so rapidly it's almost astounding. After setting up the subsidiary Honest Don's to release music that didn't quite fit the Lagwagon/Strung Out sound, the label started Pink and Black Records to release female-fronted groups who do. Among others, Fabulous Disaster shares a roster with the Muffs and the Dance Hall Crashers, but this San Francisco all-girl outfit shares much more in common with the all-boy, pro-boy, and boy-centered bands like Diesel Boy, Bracket, Chixdiggit, all on the other two labels. It's good to see an entirely female band play what is essentially testosterone driven skate rock and roll. The harmonies these girls create perfectly compliment their power-chord rampages and they do it as well as anyone in the business. This isn't reinventing the wheel at all, as it fits perfectly into almost everything Fat Wreck and Co. have done since their inception. The lyrics are ridiculous. But other than that, this isn't bad. Nothing I would run to the store for (and nothing I would go out of my way to see live), but it's cool and refreshing nonetheless. **RS**

**Face to Face "Standards and Practices" (Lady Luck/Vagrant) CD-** Every product has a target audience. For example, this magazine's target audience is young adults who are interested in independent music and culture. The target audience of Trustkill stuff are hardcore kids who like Slayer, and so on. Which leaves me with the question, what exactly is the target audience of Face to Face covering the likes of the Smiths, The Jam, and Inxs? "Don't Turn Away," is still one of my favorite punk records of all time, but after Face to Face's recent 'experimental' phase, live album, and documentary, their target audience for new material must be small enough, let alone for an album of covers. Not to say that they don't do a competent job with these songs, and pick some winners ("Chesterfield King," by Jawbreaker, "Merchandise," by Fugazi, and "Sunny Side of the Street," by the Pogues come to mind). My basic question is why? After a string of mediocre releases you would think that Face to Face would want to release an album of new material to show they've still 'got it.' To me, "Standards and Practices" is a sign that Face to Face are still struggling to find their sound-- and they'd better find it soon. Because their labelmates Saves the Day and The Alkaline Trio are going to make these veteran rockers look pretty bad when the latest Soundscan figures are released. **JB**

**The Faint "Dance Macabre" (Saddle Creek) CD-** Is there no stopping this band? When I was raving about them last year few people seemed to have taken notice of this remarkably creative band, but they seem to be steadily growing more popular, if the number of Faint badges I've seen attached to the hipster cognoscenti in San Francisco is any indication. The reason for the Faint's popularity is clear to me -- right now nobody, and I do mean nobody, is doing the retro-electro-80's-punk thing as well as the Faint. On "Dance Macabre," their third album, the Faint continue to move away from the Cure-esque sound that heavily influenced their debut, "Media," and instead concoct an intense synthesizer-meets-guitar musical maelstrom. Their songs are surprisingly dark and hard-edged-- and often highly politicized as well-- but they are eminently danceable, a fact which the Faint's unforgettable live show makes all too clear. Everybody I've ever played this band for has loved them, so get on the gravy train, dork. Along with the new Appleseed Cast CD this is my pick of the issue. **DF**

**The Fairlanes "Welcome to Nowhere" (Suburban Home) CD-** I've been meaning to check out this band for some time. The people at Suburban Home have been proclaiming their pop-punk greatness to me for a while. And, I respect all of Suburban Home's releases, even if



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7

none of them are really my thing as far as style goes. So, here we have the Fairlanes' newest record and I have to say I'm impressed. As I expected it's not really my thing—pop-punk with equal parts Blink 182 and Sicko. But, it's tight, catchy, professional, and above all fun. It's good to see that many punk bands these days are going past the 3 chord pop of Green Day type bands and venturing further into other textures and moods. And, even though I don't know if I would rush to the store and buy this, I'm sure a lot of people will eat this right up. **RS**

**Fairweather "If They Move...Kill Them" (Equal Vision) CD-** Before I get to the music, there are two things I need to get off my chest about this release:

1. How could a band that includes a quote by William Faulkner in their booklet, come up with an album title this stupid?
2. What's the point of including the lyrics to your album, if they are handwritten so illegibly that it's literally impossible to read them?

Fairweather sound a lot like Saves the Day...back when they played fast and couldn't get girls. This is melodic punk rock with lots of palm muting, and the whiny vocals that the kids go nuts for nowadays. While Fairweather has some interesting things going on within their highly textured music, ultimately their lack of originality overshadows their positive aspects. This is a good starting point, but I think if Fairweather took the time to really develop their own sound and not worry so much about what other bands are doing, they could be something truly special. **JB**

**Fall Silent "6 Years in the Desert" (Revelation) CD-** Here we have a collection of some of Fall Silent's previous work. I still think Revelation decided to put this CD out to make a quick buck even though their publicist claims otherwise. Nonetheless, I was soured on Fall Silent before even listening to this: they thank their lord and savior, Jesus, in such a grandiose manner that it kind of makes an agnostic like myself

wretch. Secondly their singer sings like Mike Ski of Brother's Keeper if Mr. Ski had a puppet stuck in his throat. And thirdly, I just heard a lyric repeated over and over again that goes: "When I was born my eyes were crying / when I was born you all were smiling." I bet John Lennon is doing somersaults in his grave. Okay, so the music is one of those "let's see how fast and heavy we can play without actually making sense." Oh yeah, they rape Black Flag's classic "No Values" in case anyone cares. This is boring and I am hungry. Too bad you can't eat plastic. **RS**

**Fetish "Silver" (Adeline) CD-** There's something about a warm spring day

that puts me in a good mood and makes me enjoy shitty punk. I have tried listening to Fetish on numerous occasions and each time hated them. I finally sit down to write this review on a beautiful Sunday morning, put on the CD, hear the same shitty punk/metal fusion that sucks so much, yet I can't help but enjoy it. Shitty, shitty punk that I just don't have the heart to tear apart. So they get off easy. For some reason it just sounds like fun. I might add that the on previous listens, they sounded more like Limp Bizkit than anyone else, but I don't hear it today. **AT**

**Fifteen "Survivor" (Sub City) CD-** Let me start by saying that "Swain's First Bike Ride" and "Choice of a New Generation" are two of my favorite albums. Fifteen used to be amazing. What happened? How do you forget how to write good songs? What makes you decide that you've had enough of this playing good, original music and decide to play the same sludge every other punk band is playing? Jeff, what is going through your mind? Even your lyrics have gotten worse. Why is there a backpack with an old Jawbreaker patch on it in the CD artwork? To remind people that you were around (and even good) way back when? Survivor? I think not. **AT**

**The Figgs "Sucking in Stereo" (Hearbox Records) CD-** Remember the old riddle that reads, "How does a band sing the chorus 'Cheap cassettes of Motorhead!' and still keep a straight face?" Neither do I, but the Figgs somehow have figured out the answer on their most recent album, "Sucking in Stereo," a welcome and refreshing collection of barn-burning rockers that squeeze the power trio formula ragged and slam the listener's proverbial balls to the wall. While the antecedents to most of these songs can be traced back to the Replacements or Cheap Trick, the opening drum fill of "Opening Night" leads into an unmistakably glam beat reminiscent of Gary Glitter (with hand-claps too!), yet as soon as the guitar, bass and nicotine-stained vocals kick in, the Figgs sound positively Stoozy. Indeed, the rest of "Sucking in Stereo" is a no-frills affair where their energy picks up any remaining slack (if one considers the lack of distorted guitars a drawback) and lyrical inspiration can apparently come from anywhere. For the Figgs, stage fright, bouncing up and down, playing the wrong chord, the aforementioned heavy metal tapes, and of course, unobtainable girls are all fair game. However, be forewarned: if you must commiserate with the Figgs on the subject of unrequited love, leave the Kleenex in your emo pile because as someone famous once should have said, "There's no crying in rock'n'roll!" [Guest Reviewer: **Jon Orren**]

**Foundation (Fueled By Ramen) CD-** This release is an indication that the boys in Ann Beretta have gotten sick of finding new ways to rearrange the handful of power chords which comprise their good but almost too predictable brand of southern punk rock. For Foundation, these Virginians decided to sit down with a couple of acoustic guitars and record some Ann Beretta classics, as well as some new material. While I initially cringed at the idea of Ann Beretta "Unplugged," their music translates successfully to the acoustic arena, predominantly because, well, these guys are good songwriters. The obvious emphasis is on the vocals, and in this

new arena the listener is forced to pay closer attention to the romantic narratives, which find a welcome home under a bed of resonating steel strings, rather than being obscured by the usual wall of distortion. The most surprising aspect of this CD is that it truly isn't a novelty, in fact it makes perfect sense. A good song is a good song no matter if you're playing it through blaring electric guitars, sensitive acoustics, or hell, even a tuba ensemble. Maybe that's why Ann Beretta has been around for so long. Either that or because they were on LOI records' inaugural release...you be the judge. **JB**

**Four Hundred Years "New Imperialism" (Lovitt) CD-** The New Imperialism refers to the fact that the capitalist US "culture" is fast becoming the world's culture, with our God being the dollar. 400 Years have been combining politics such as this with first-rate emo-core for years, but they have decided to throw in the towel. With "New Imperialism," they are going out with a bang, though. The vocals are gruff and passionate, and the music dark and rocking, with starts and stops that make you rock back and forth. If you have the patience to fast-forward to the 50th minute of the last track, there is a beautiful acoustic song with all the guys taking turns singing "Nobody likes me, everybody hates me, I think I'll go and eat some worms." **AT**

**Frenzel Rhomb "Shut Your Mouth" (Fat Wreck) CD-** Wow. This is some of the worst punk I've heard in a while. I heard their first album years ago, and thought it was pretty good, but man oh man is this bad. Equal parts generic and over-produced. The first track opens with the sound of bottles breaking. Never heard that before. Next they go into a song that sounds surprisingly like "Murder the Government" by NoFX. I know NoFX is good. So is Green Day. So were the Ramones. That doesn't mean that you have to sound exactly like them. These guys are from Australia, so maybe that's their excuse, except that they've been on Fat for a while and should know better by now. Boring album, but if you like SoCal punk and want another album that sounds like all the rest, then maybe you'll like this. **AT**

**Frodus "And We Washed Our Weapons In The Sea" (Fueled by Ramen) CD-** With some of the records Fueled by Ramen is putting out I would guess that they're not banking on a style of music that made their label a household name anymore, namely pop-punk. Are labels like Fueled by Ramen and Lookout!, both known for their above average pop-punk records, gasp!, trying to be taken more seriously? Anyways, one of the loveable creatures (or music geeks depending on how you look at it) at the label has been telling me how great this record is for a while, and some very very pretentious kid I met at a party with a My Bloody Valentine shirt, proclaimed its greatness as well. Of course, you can't trust the guy who works at a label to fairly judge his own musical releases, and that kid at the party was too much of a dick to be given any credit. So, I have to ask: why didn't anyone tell me this record was so good? Easily the most consistent, manicured, and texturally wonderful record of the late Frodus' career, I am totally shocked. I mean, I always sort of liked these guys, except for the major faux pas of playing Ithaca, NY, (where I went to college for those who haven't paid attention the last 9 issues) twice in the same month. But this, this is like the most groovy elements of Hoover, the most clever parts of Jawbox, with

a healthy portion of June of 44. Rolling basslines that you just want to dive into, drum beats that could make your heart skip, and guitar lines that wander from surf to noise to fuzzed-out syncope. This is great, and like many other great records I'm sure it will be overlooked. **RS**

**Further Seems Forever "The Moon is Down" (Tooth and Nail) CD-** Des this band name strike anyone else as the kind of thing one comes up with while high? Like, one of those late-night pot-brnie sessions of philosophy with a friend: "No man, life is so deep. Further seems forever dude. Hey, is this Phish on hte stereo?" Maybe it's the fact that this is on Tooth and Nail or maybe it's my impression of this music being so unsuitably tear-jerking and dramatic but I really wanted to hate this record. The problem is that I can't. Further Seems Forever are perhaps the best example of a radio-friendly emorock band out there. They play with technical accuracy unmatched in the genre, their melodies are urgent and poignant, and former-singer Chris Carraba (now of the Dashboard Confessionals) has a voice that is so beautiful and soothing that he could easily charm the pants off any girl in a Getup Kids T-shirt. I really don't have much to say about this. It's good, it's inspiring, and it doesn't really leave a lasting impression on me in any way. **RS**

**A Great Divide (Frenetic) CD-** I want to like this, I really do. As a matter of fact, I want to like everything Frenetic puts out, but I think I have yet to like even my first release of theirs. To their credit, their stuff is all off the beaten path with many of their bands employing bizarre timbres or time signatures-- no boring pop here, and nothing is cliché on Frenetic. But, nothing is my thing either. A Great Divide fall somewhere in between Drive Like Jehu and the VSS (with that late '80s/early '90s DC sound in effect here). The recording is nice and crude, the guitars are nice and overdriven, and the vocals are nice and whiney in the mix. But, I feel like I've been there and done that. And, you know what? Drive Like Jehu and the Rites of Spring do this stuff much better. **RS**

**Gotohells "Rock n Roll America" (Vagrant) CD-** The Gotohells are the black sheep of the Vagrant family. They aren't catchy like the Alkaline Trio, nor are they 'dreamy' like Saves The Day, and they definitely aren't sensitive like the Dashboard Confessional. The Gotohells are straight-up, back-to-roots rock 'n' roll, who sound like they have worn out their respective copies of "Raw Power," by the Stooges. This, my friends, is a good thing...a very, very good thing. While the Gotohells maintain Iggy's visceral snarl, their technical ability is what really separates them from the hordes of punk bands in garages all over this great country. Each song on "Rock N Roll America" is packed full of blazing leads and frantic drum fills, which only elevate the urgency of their music. Ultimately, this group plays classic rock, in a way that is still extremely relevant. Much more relevant than the recycled pop-punk spewing like toxic waste from the collective plumbing of the independent music industry lately. No, the Gotohells aren't pretty, and you won't want



# 8

their song, "Lock up your daughters," on a mix tape for your secret crush. But if you're looking for some good ol' fashioned Rock n' Roll, the Gotohells are an

overdriven reminder of how things were meant to be. **JB**

**Grade "Headfirst Straight to Hell" (Victory) CD-** I hate reviewing Grade records. It's hard to watch the steady decline of band you once loved and thought could improve the state of hardcore music. Their classic "Separate the Magnets" album showed how heavy music could also incorporate delicate emotions; Kyle Bishop's transition from heartfelt screams to soaring leads paralleled the music's dynamic prowess. However, after that release back way in 1998, their music has grown less inspiring. Even though Mr. Bishop abandoned his brutal bark for a more marketable cry on "Under the Radar," I grew to enjoy the pop sensibility of the songs though it lacked the intensity and sincerity of the group's Second Nature days. But after founding guitarist Greg Taylor left the band for his own project, Jersey, Grade's next release, "The Embarrassing Beginning" was, well, embarrassing. (The first half of the album had already been released and the rest of it was second-rate "acoustic" versions of newer material.) For these reasons, when I popped in "Headfirst Straight to Hell" and heard the brutal scream of Kyle Bishop, I rejoiced. Has the Grade I used to follow around like the Grateful Dead back in high school triumphantly returned? Not really. While this album harkens back to Grade's heavier days mixed with their recent bubblegum flare, it ultimately comes off as a weak attempt to reconcile these two entities. It does have its shining moments; "Little Satisfaction" is classic Grade: great hooks, shifting octave chords and Kyle's cheery but strangely poignant lyrics (hey, they're from Canada, give 'em a break, eh?) However, this song alone offers "little satisfaction" to the listener since it is sandwiched between songs that sound forced and artificial. Oh yeah, I'm not sure whether or not to give these Canadians props for copping an Iron Maiden riff in their song "In the Wake of Poseidon." Hey guys if imitation is the highest form of flattery, is there any way you could imitate yourselves four years ago? **JB**

**Guided By Voices "Isolation Drills" (TVT) CD-** How can one band drink so much? Don't try to justify it mathematically because Robert Pollard and crew defy rationale. I saw GBV in Syracuse a few months ago, and one of their guitar players literally drank an entire bottle of Jack Daniels in the course of their set (pre-encore). Luckily, it's not as difficult to figure that "Isolation Drills" is the strongest GBV record since "Bee Thousand." The typical track-by-track breakdown is unnecessary, because there aren't any songs that particularly stand out; they're all brilliant. Pollard's voice has never sounded better (check out the Bowie impersonation on the song "Frostman"); and the current line-up shows enough restraint to give Pollard the spotlight during his shining moments, and back him with the power of a Mack Truck when necessary. If you're lucky you'll get the limited edition version of the album which contains a link to a secret GBV website, complete with live and rare recordings of the band. Although these guys are getting up in their years, they've blown the youngsters

out of the water with this one. Let's hope for our sake that they stay away from the twelve-step programs, at least until the next record. **JB**

**Haste "When Reason Sleeps" (Century Media) CD-** Apparently I was the only one who paid attention to Haste's remarkable first record as I have seen little to no press, no ads for tours, and no other fanfare for this powerful and rhythmically insightful Alabama hardcore act. Combining dual vocals, one high and one low, Indecision-esque onslaughts of dropped-D power-chord chugga chuggas, and a drum/bass combo that provides possibly the best low-end combination in aggressive rock and roll, this band is taking a heavy sound and making it catchy and threatening unlike any other in the genre. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> songs on this disc could easily be specialty show hits in the mainstream radio world with a slight push, but maybe not as they are far more interesting than anything Limp Bizkit could ever dream of doing, much less their New York hardcore counterparts. I'm not sure what else to say about this record except that I imagine Century Media is doing a terrible job of promoting it. This CD could easily be a staple in every single hardcore kid in America's collection if they appeared on the right tours. Hell, this CD could be replacing the sounds emanating from every Incubus and Deftones infected kid in the world with just a bit of work. This is a great CD and I fear Century Media is completely dropping the ball on this one. **RS**

**The Higher Burning Fire "In Plain Song" (Second Nature) CD-** What do we have here? A little bit of jangle-pop at LOI? Now this is a surprise. A pleasant one, though. With light instrumentation that weaves complexities not usually seen in jangle-pop, these are beautifully crafted plain songs (aply named album, huh?). I was recently involved in a discussion with Ross about what the most diverse labels are. I wish to give Second Nature the crown, using The Higher Burning Fire as my trump card. These guys from Kansas have authentic-sounding British accents, and their music sounds like an Elephant 6 band. They are on the same label as the Blood Brothers?! That's diversity. Not the kind of diversity that colleges claim to pander to the young high school hopefuls, but the kind of diversity that comes from mixing screamo and jangle! And this stuff is good, too. Second Nature, once again, I salute you. In closing, I must inform everyone that this cd has the weirdest artwork I have ever seen. The words are illegible. The CD is plain yellow. The background is plain brown, and the wordless front and back are cutouts in various muted tones of purples, indigos, oranges, yellows, and pinks. **AT**

**Hi-Standard "Love is a Battlefield" (Fat Wreck Chords) CD-** Despite the somewhat dubious title of their latest EP (isn't that a Pat Benatar song?), Hi-Standard continue to impress me with their technically adept and highly energetic brand of pop-punk. I think one of the things that gives this Japanese group such lasting appeal is that they are clearly having a lot of fun making music, and their enthusiasm comes across in spades. Fat Wreck Chords may be putting on a little weight around the edges, but in my opinion Hi-Standard will continue to be one of their best assets. Plus any band so shameless with its covers has to be appreciated—first they did "California Dreaming," now this time around they do an Elvis cover—and a lot better than UB40 ever did, that's for sure. This is a delightfully fun EP. **DF**

**Hoods "Time... the Destroyer" (Victory) CD-** I'm not going to lie. This isn't my type of music.

Perhaps I was more into hardcore of the old-school variety when I helped start *Law of Inertia* a few years ago, and I certainly have a healthy roster of artier or more unusual hardcore bands passing through my CD player on a regular basis, but while I can appreciate the quality of this new release from Hoods (formerly the Sacto Hoods, in case you were wondering), I can't get into it on a personal level. Screamy hardcore, lots of tattoos and thick guitars and lyrics about burning on the inside—if this is your cup of tea, and for many readers it probably is, then it's certainly passable. In fact, it's better than passable, it's actually pretty good. But it's definitely only for fans of the genre; the Hoods probably don't want any crossover appeal, and they're not going to get it. **DF**

**Homesick for Space (Immigrant Sun) LP-** Relax. Even though this band is called "Homesick for Space," I'm pretty sure that they're not aliens, or even homesick, for that matter. However HFS' ethereal mood music definitely transports the listener galaxies away from the hectic stress of everyday life. This band is very reminiscent of Mogwai, but with a tad more structure and less weird electronic lurches and smatterings. The compositions are expertly arranged, with piano, ambient guitar, and subdued vocals constructing a proverbial pillow for the listener to rest his weary head on. If you haven't heard of HFS yet, don't be alarmed. The maturity in their music is frightfully premature; this EP is the band's first release. Fans of Godspeed you Black Emperor, Tristeza, and Radiohead take note and pick this one up before HFS is plastered all over the corporate music mags. Hopefully Homesick for Space won't be leaving anytime soon. **JB**

**Hot Water Music "A Flight and a Crash" (Epitaph) CD-** After releasing five full-lengths and a seemingly endless amount of seven-inches, Hot Water Music still manage to reinvent themselves on every new record. Their latest, "A Flight and a Crash," unequivocally proves that HWM are more than Budweiser-swilling, Bukowski-reading, bearded rednecks. Courtesy of a new label (Epitaph Records), the album is cleaner, better-produced, and easier to find than previous releases; but at its core, Hot Water Music are what they've always been: four working class guys from Gainesville, Florida, who've become the best punk band in the world. HWM have been my favorite band for the last four years—in a borderline fanatical sense. I have every single they've released, and their beer-soaked set lists are taped to the walls of my room. I've criss-crossed the thruways to catch them play in Detroit, Louisville, Columbus, Buffalo, Philadelphia—wherever their music takes me. Their albums are a progression of the live show: the energy, feeling, and sincerity palpating from the turntable assaults the listener via buzzing guitars and hoarse voices. Still, I was a bit uncertain about this record. Their split release with Leatherface and subsequent full-length, "No Division," left me wondering if their song "Just Don't Say You Lost it," had become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Not that these releases were mediocre—they had their share of excellent songs—but they seemed rushed and were missing the inventiveness of albums like "Fuel for the Hate Game" and "Forever and Counting." Let's face it, Chris Wollard and Chuck Ragan aren't the best guitarists in the world, and while bassist Jason Black and drummer George Rebelo are virtuosos, individually the members of HWM are just that. Individuals. The appeal of Hot Water Music has always been their ability to come together and write

honest music that transcends categorization. Music which inevitably varies from album to album, but retains its own distinct style, smashing through boundaries and attracting fans of punk, hardcore, rock, and jazz. Thankfully, my suspicions were washed away as soon as HWM came flooding out of the gates with the album's title track. It's more overtly rockin' by their own standards, but loaded with the same blend of raw emotion and jaw-dropping technique they've spoiled us with time and time again. The guitars battle each other like rabid dogs, while the rhythm sections' lighting fast (yet tasteful) fills act as sonic glue, keeping the canines from tearing each others' heads off. Misfits style "whoa-oo" group vocals propel the song to its climax, the lyrics mimicking the music, "Heart racing, head pounding, from the screaming!" Things slow down for the second song, "Jack Of all Trades," a mid-tempo number with a haunting distortion-drenched melody line. This is classic HWM, and the brilliant palm-muted guitar riff is an exercise in the merits of simplicity. Without being preachy, the band cries for honesty in a scene dominated by gossip and politics. HWM get us in touch our most basic emotions, whether it's through a motivational sing-along or just one perfect line that cuts through all the bullshit. It's a rare talent I've only witnessed in a handful of bands, and one that can't be boiled down into adjectives or catch phrases. It needs to be felt and experienced. Punk rock needs Hot Water Music as much as Hot Water Music needs punk rock. Their music is cathartic for listener and band alike. The sudden wave of bands who value selling records and singing about "rocking out" instead of the human experience make HWM's music more vital now than ever. We need to know that punk rock can still be innovative. It doesn't have to be rehashed octave chords over sappy lyrics about girls. HWM knows it as well: the final lines to album echo the words, "Wait, it's all sounding the same. It's all charades and shadows. Call it trashing." In a landscape of bands that are all sounding the same, Hot Water Music have built a huge following based on who they are and not what they're pretending to be. **JB**

**Hundred Hands "Little Eyes" (Deep Elm) CD-** If the new Appleseed Cast CD reviewed elsewhere in this issue is indicative of the best and most genre-bending music Deep Elm has to offer, then this EP from Hundred Hands (who, interestingly enough, include members of the abovementioned band) is at the other end of the spectrum. By which I don't mean to say that they're bad, rather that they're lacking in any particular distinguishing characteristics and are therefore standard Deep Elm material—one part Getup Kids-style pop, one part introspective emo. This six songs here show the occasional creative flourish, but on the whole it feels like Hundred Hands is rethinking ground that has already been covered a hundred times before. **DF**



# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: **RS** | Jonah Bayer: **JB** | Jason Murphy: **JM** | du proserpio: **dup** | Adam Parks: **AP** | Jonah Brucker-Cohen: **JBC** | Adam Thorman: **AT** | Nick Tamburro: **NT** | Dan Frantic: **DF**

9

**The Icarus Line "Mono" (Crank!)** CD- Crank records! Now this is a surprise, not at all what you'd expect from this label. This is great rock and roll, no emo anywhere in sight. Picture the garage sort of feel (not necessarily the sound, but the feel) of bands like Delta 72 and the Mooney Suzuki, but with Mark Arm of Mudhoney on vocals. The vocals are so similar, in fact, that I'm already getting excited to go listen to "Touch Me I'm Sick" after this. Fuzzed out guitars (Superfuzz?) and a grimy bass tone drive over deep heavy grooves. There's a sloppy edge to all this that gives it a raw, honest, and yes, grungy sound. It's obvious that the rocking is the priority and not the playing, and this makes for a great listen and I'm sure an awesome show. If there are more bands like this, Garage/Grunge hybrids, will we call the scene Garunge or Grunadge? **NT**

**Idle Hands "Building a Desert" (Trustkill)** CD- You know, on first listen this CD was a throwaway-- not nearly warranting the excitement I felt after I heard the EP they released prior to this. Plus, it sounded as if Meagan Ball, the singer for this band as well as emcore pioneers Copper didn't quite work with the more straight forward punk sound of Idle Hands as opposed to the far more emo tones of her previous effort. But, on future listens I find this to be a very enjoyable listen. While no major walls are being broken here, as it's pretty much power chord after power chord over those galloping drum beats made famous by Bad Religion in the late '80s, it's still pretty good. Catchy, fun, and full of some great breakdown choruses. I wouldn't run to the store for this, but if you happen to find a twenty-dollar bill on the ground or something then you might want to pick this up. **RS**

**The Impossibles "4 Song Brick Bomb" (Fueled By Ramen)** CD- I'm convinced that Brian McTernan is a robot. Seriously, he's produced three out of the last ten records I've gotten to review, a massive workload. Maybe the reason that he can produce all these records is that he doesn't need to sleep...he just needs to recharge his batteries. I mean he's a great producer and all, but has anyone ever considered that maybe he's "too good"? I would like to see a committee assigned to investigate "Mr. McTernan," and the DNA tests to back it up. Anyone with any relevant information about "Mr. McTernan's" possible secret identity as a robot please email me. There will be a handsome reward for any relevant information. Now that I got that out of my system, let's talk about this record. Judging from the subtle title of this album's first song, "Disintegration" (is the best album, ever), The Impossibles really like the Cure. Unfortunately, they don't sound like them. Instead, The Impossibles have that whole "we're punk, no we're

pop, wait...we're punk," thing going on, which seems so popular nowadays. Maybe if I hadn't heard so many albums that sound exactly like this I would be more impressed, but this album really didn't do much for me. I will admit that their android producer did another superb job. End Transmission. **JB**

**The Influents "Check Please" (Adeline)** CD- Adeline is turning into one of the best punk labels around. This was the best record of the year 2000. The Influents is the new band of Bill and Jason from Pinhead Gunpowder, and the vocals have an uncanny resemblance to PG bandmate Billy Joe. In part for this reason, I have heard this album described as the perfect complement to Green Day's "Warning." This album is made of beautiful pop songs as played by seasoned punk musicians, with an occasional hint of country. Unlike many veteran punk bands recently, this album is neither derivative nor over-produced. It's just plain amazing. **AT**

**Inkling "Miscommunication" (Hex Records)** CD- Hm, I can't figure out this band. One minute they're practically splitting their guitars in half with Dillinger Escape Plan type synco-pated destruction-- not as technical but no less brutal-- and then the next minute they switch gears and go into something akin to moody emo melodicism. All in all everything here is pretty good, but there is no consistency. At least Dillinger you know you're getting a bat to the head on every single track of power-violence mayhem, but here it's as if they can't make up their mind. Kind of like when it's really hot outside and you put a really cold coke can up to your forehead and then you want to pass out from the contrast. Bad analogy, sorry. But this band could be really good in the future if they make up their mind and develop their own sound. A strong release. **RS**

**Integrity "Closure" (Victory Records)** CD- This isn't Integrity. Well, technically it is, since Integrity has basically always just been Dwid (and since there are no credits on this album, it's hard to say if this contains any other original members). But this is a far cry from the band who single-handedly invented metal-hardcore and made it okay to have extended guitar solos next to windmill-inspiring breakdowns. This is also light-years behind the band who released "Those who Fear Tomorrow," one of my favorite records of all-time. "Closure" is a mix between Dwid's noise side-project Psywarfare and Integrity 2000, the latter being a second-rate Integrity cover band who also released a record on Victory. Years down the road some might hail this album like Lou Reed's "Metal Machine Music"-- an experimental work of art-- but for now it seems very rushed, substituting weird beeping sounds for blistering guitar lines. Dwid seems to have been listening to a lot of Misfits lately, as the standout track, "No Time for Sudden Glances" sports Misfits-style backing vocals. They also launch into a impromptu version of "Hybrid Moments," which reminds us all that Glenn Danzig was the singer for Misfits, not Dwid. In between the weird hissing sounds and piano interludes, there is some good metal here, and the strained-vocal chords still cut through the mix. But this is second-rate Integrity, and if it's closure Dwid wants then he's going to get it, because I don't think anyone wants to hear another Integrity record like this. **JB**

**The Ivory Coast "Clouds" (Polyvinyl)** CD- Another great indie-pop band from Polyvinyl, The Ivory Coast is a little reminiscent of the Promise Ring, and a lot reminiscent of Superchunk. At first listen, the overall product seems a little bland, with vocals a bit lackluster and a production quality that leaves something to be desired, but after a second chance, and a more in depth attention to the music and the lyrics, the accomplishment of this band became more apparent. The overall vibe is no doubt a poppy indie rock, but take into account intelligent and well written lyrics, well developed songs, and a short list of guest instruments to color up the product, and you'll find an impressive record that is certainly worth checking out. **AP**

**Jersey "Definition" (Fueled By Ramen)** CD- I don't get it. I don't understand how Greg Taylor could leave Grade after creating such innovative music on albums like "And Such is Progress..." and "Separate the Magnets," to play generic punk rock. Plain and simple. While Jersey is definitely tight and has plenty of energy, there is nothing that really makes them stand out from their more established counterparts, like Rancid or Ann Beretta. Yawn. Actually, my favorite part about Jersey's last album was the female vocalist, which they have apparently gotten rid of this time around. This further confuses me to what Mr. Taylor is thinking. Could it simply be a Canadian thing that we Americans will never understand? Too much Molson Ice? Possibly. Yes, "Definition" is produced by Brian McTernan so it sounds great and yes, they do an excellent cover of Dag Nasty's "Downtime." The problem is that we've heard this all before, and it was more interesting when Dag Nasty was doing it ten years ago. If Grade's last release is any indication, they could use Greg's help right about now; so hopefully he'll come to his senses, and realize that he is capable of much greater things than re-hashed Rancid riffs. **JB**

**Joan of Arc "How Can Any Thing So Little Be Any More?" (Jade Tree)** CD- If you've heard the last few Joan of Arc records, you can probably tell whether or not you're going to like this. The actual songs on this album, though, (and songs are different than tracks here, there are 8 tracks and only 4 songs, the other 4 tracks being ambient soundscapes, kids talking into a tape recorder, or both, simultaneously) are, in their own way, surprising. It seems almost a nod to their first seven inch: sparser, more understated piano and acoustic based songs with tasteful electronic embellishments, ones that stay embellishments without fighting to overtake the songs. The lyrics follow suit and strip themselves down as well. Tim Kinsella sings, "I don't even know when I'm joking or not anymore," and I think he means it. There's less of the word-play-for-the-sake-of-it here, and more of what I guess you might consider "things that you could actually say to a real person." Still, though I think the songs are really good (and though I'm sucker for little kids doing anything at all) I don't really understand the point of a CD with only four songs and a lot of filler. This one is mainly for completists. **NT**

**Juno "A Future Lives in Past Tense" (DeSoto)** CD- The first song on Juno's sophomore LP sounds like the soundtrack for the beginning of an epic story. Guitars, bass, drums, and organ fuse together into a hailstorm of sound that evokes vast armies charging into unforsaken battlegrounds. Well maybe that's too poetic,

but Juno make a case for themselves by wrapping up melodies and time signatures into a blinding whirlwind of raw power and emo angst. "Covered With Hair" charges along this path as singer/guitarist Arlie Carstens blasts out lyrics that epitomize his generation: "All the hip kids wail in the cold/ Bluffing to dying sounds of indie rock's dying soul." Indie rock might not be entirely dead, but Juno could be the wake-up call it so desperately needs. The optimism of early 90s intellectual head-pounding bands like Number One Cup and Jawbox can all be found here, especially in the noisy yet melodic, "We Slept in Rented Rooms [The Old School Bush]". Guitars rub against each other with just enough friction to start a small heatwave in this Seattle-based band's post grunge apocalypse. But even amid the chaos, Juno seem to relish in their lighter moments and make this album a triumph with every new listen. **JBC**

**Keelhaul "II" (Hydrahead)** CD- Music for the modern day nautical wilderness, Keelhaul cranks out epic new metal that is the perfect soundtrack to a futuristic and violent sailing of the seven seas. About 80% vocal-free, the low and heavy thrashing guitars are consistently reminiscent of the kind of turbulence that such actors as Kevin Costner (Waterworld), Mark Wahlberg (The Perfect Storm), and whoever was in 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea must have experienced in their respective film roles. When the vocals do kick in, they are tougher-guy-but-not-quite-tough-guy growls, and their sparseness truly lends them a good deal of weight, while simultaneously indicating the overriding importance of the music. Keelhaul's II demonstrates a great diversity of rhythm and technicality unified by a modest and intelligent production. It's tough to say how fresh this sound is within its genre, but this is certainly a well-written and well-recorded album. **AP**

**Kevin Devine "Circle Gets the Square" (Immigrant Sun)** CD- I was genuinely excited to listen to this CD; not because I have ever heard of Kevin Devine, but because of this album's cover. It depicts the top of Kevin Devine's head against a beige wall emblazoned with a Guns N' Roses "Appetite for Destruction" era poster. In fact, it's the very same poster I had in my room during middle school! I didn't recognize any of the song titles, but I figured that at least Kevin would throw in a rendition of "Rocket Queen" as a hidden track. But after about five seconds of this CD, it seems like "rocking" isn't a word in his vocabulary. Kevin's one of the new breed of acoustic emo songwriter-types, the most popular being the Dashboard Confessional; you know, whiney songs with introspective lyrics and a less than subtle Elliot Smith influence. That said, Kevin is actually very talented and more than just an indie rocker who accidentally unplugged his amp. Unfortunately, playing this genre of music throws him into the pantheon of great musicians like Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, and Paul Simon; competition that poor Kevin can't hold a candle to. While this release should please pre-teen girls who bought Immigrant Sun's other acoustic release, the Saves the Day EP, I would advise fans of this type of music should stick to the classics, they never go out of style. **JB**



# 10

**Kid With Man Head**  
**"Fond Memories Of The Halibut Rodeo..."** (Forest/ Twentyfourseven)  
 CDep- Catchy energetic-pop-punk, soaring dual vox and so

on. If I never before heard stuff like this and I saw these guys in a bar I'd fall in love in seconds. However, they're about 12 years too late. Well, I suppose they threw me off with an occasional surprise in arrangement. Greg Graf-fin apparently mixed 4 of the 5 tracks here. Approach only if you need your fix and know it. **dup**

**The Killing Flame "Another Breath" (Equal Vision) CD-** Oh, EVR, what have you done with this one? I'll be the first one to admit I'm not all that into Equal Vision's current roster. Bane, The Stryder, Fairweather, Until the End, none of them really do it for me. Other than Converge, all the bands on EVR are good at what they do, but they lack a sense of a uniqueness and independent creative voice. So, here we have The Killing Flame who are not a good band. Their singer (singers?) has a very hard time singing in tune; the shout-out choruses sound forced and, yes, self-righteous; and basically they are doing nothing new at all. I think a good comparison would be AFI meets Embrace, but not nearly as good or as talented or competent as either. This is a waste of plastic. **RS**

**Kill Your Idols "Funeral for a Feeling" (Side One Dummy) CD-** Wow, New York hardcore is really lagging behind the rest of the world. It's only when I hear bands like Kill Your Idols, who seem to be the biggest of the still-underground New York hardcore bands, that I really understand how cool places like Boston, LA, and Florida have become and how New York isn't producing anything new. Instead, NY seems content to rehash the same old same old in new and different forms. Honestly, reviewing a Kill Your Idols disc really isn't fair to the band, as this outfit was meant to be experienced live and not on record. But, since you're here I'll indulge you. The vocals, which a recent ad claimed were "lyrical genius," are spat out at different tempos from the guitars and are so throaty they're almost impossible to bare for longer than two or three songs. The drums are fast, furious, and boring as they play the same gallop throughout. The guitars, on the other hand, shine. They are interesting, intense, and fast as hell in a Gorilla Biscuits meets late-80s Bad Religion way. In summary, Kill Your Idols have released a so-so record in my opinion, a claim I'm sure will be contested from many a New York hardcore kid. I wouldn't go as far to say this band is all hype, but maybe the thought would never have entered my head had the band not decided to record 17 tunes which are all essentially the same song. **RS**

**Kind of Like Spitting/Jeff London split "home #1" (Post Parlo) CDEP-** Usually it's not a good thing when the layout of an album is better than the music, but since the layout for the premiere edition of the HOME collector's series is so beautiful, I'll try not to be too brutal with these two singer/songwriters (do you hate that term too?) Wanna know what it looks like? Well, it's a collapsible cardboard shell containing a red, wedding-invitation-textured insert and a tiny hand-numbered booklet with the lyrics and narratives. I couldn't tell either of these artists apart, since they have a very

similar style: sparse acoustic guitars, cracking voices and really, really depressing lyrics. They both sound like the offspring of Jeff Tweedy and Bright Eyes; the songs are simple and repetitive with an alternative feel, but retaining an element of brutal honesty and introspection that Conor Oberst would approve of. That said, we've all heard this numerous times before, and like I wrote in the Kevin Devine review, a lot of people have done it better. While I'm not expecting every songwriter to write "Blonde on Blonde," there needs to be something that grabs me about the artist—a distinction or defining characteristic that separates them from the other saps hunched over acoustic guitars at Starbucks. The fact that I couldn't even tell these two artists apart from each other isn't a good sign. Pass. **JB**

**Knut "Bastardiser" (Hydrahead) CD-** This album from Swiss hardcore quartet Knut (pronounced "Knoot," Russian for "whip") isn't composed of new material, but is rather the domestic re-release of an album that was previously unavailable in the US. It's evil and sludgy as all hell, that's for sure. In fact, it's much more metal than it is hardcore, albeit slowed down to a Melvins-esque pace. I don't particularly like it. **DF**

**Kolya (Caulfield) CD-** This has got that kind of artwork that just says, we want to put as little as possible on the insert. Small as hell too. Rather mathy guitar calisthenics with not-sung-more-spoken vocals is what Kolya wears to the party. Whereas the playing is good, engaged and somewhat interesting, the vocals seem to just sit on top of the mix. That and one of the 3 members has a voice that's just too high and absurd sounding for this style. The guitars are light, with that amplified acoustic feel to them, and provide the muscle over the skeletal drumming. This Boston act has played with bands like Burning Airlines and that somehow fits. Fragmented and arty, this is all right but not my thing. **dup**

**Ladderback "Honest, I Swear It's the Turn-styles" (Bifocal) CD-** Yes, I will admit it, I do have a stable of bands that I continually will use as reference to better explain a band's sound. There are many reasons to do this (laziness unfortunately being up there as a justification), but sometimes it is because a band sounds so much like another band that it begs to be done. In the case of Ladderback, I continually heard Grade mixed with the Get Up Kids. Should I be burned at the stake because some band has yet to really shake the heavy hands of their influences and contemporaries? Maybe. Should you give this band a chance? Well, if the mixing of Grade and the Get Up Kids sounds like a perfect compound, dig in. **JM**

**Landspeedrecord! "Road to Fight" (Resin) CD-** So I threw on this record, hit play, and then yelled. That's how odd this record is. First off, the guy's voice is not my favorite, but one can always work through that, so I'll let it slide. Second off, the lyrics are pretty bad, which I can also let slide. The proverbial straw, then, is that it is just uncomfortable feeling. All the rhythms feel like they could either rock out or slow down a little, but they never do; they just stagnate. I'm fine when bands cross genres (in this case, what feels to me like punk and indie rock), but not when you sit on the fence and do neither one justice. Ugh, any record that makes me tense and it is not the intention of the artist or artists is out of my CD player. Oh yeah, and the packaging is just bad (please, someone tell the guys in the band to lose their beards). **JM**

**Lawrence Arms "Ghost Stories" (Asian Man) CD-** Holy SHIT! The Broadways live! When the members of Slapstick broke up in 1996, they went on to form Tuesday, Alkaline Trio, The Broadways, Honor System, and Lawrence Arms. The best of these bands were the Broadways (yes, they were and are still better than Alk Trio), but they broke up after a couple of years. Their members went on to Honor System and Lawrence Arms, but neither band lived up to the high standards the Broadways set, until this record. "Ghost Stories" is fucking amazing. By combining the rocking emotional Chicago sound with the east bay punk of Jawbreaker and Crimpshrine, they have created heaven once again. As a special treat, they included a country song and two acoustic tracks as a bonus after the last track. These three songs are almost better than the rest of the album. Amazing. **AT**

**Lefty's Deciever "Conversations on Favored Nations" (Happy Couples Never Last) CD-** Hailing from the city of brotherly love, Lefty's Deciever are one of the few bands who decided to brave the weather and come to Ithaca this year. You see, when I went to LA the Ithaca scene just basically fell apart; no one knew what to do without my Yoda-like guidance. Okay, so that isn't true, but for reasons unknown not a lot of non-local bands made it though I-town last semester. Lefty's Deciever did play manage to play a show with Euclid and Engine Down and while the show dragged on for way too long, I remember being impressed with their performance and energy. Their CD is no different, as Lefty's Deciever walks a tightrope of genres and doesn't need a safety net. While Built to Spill is the most immediate influence, there are also elements of everyone ranging from The Flaming Lips to Fugazi inherent in their music. Lefty Deceiver's greatest strength is their ability to craft beautiful pop melodies around unorthodox experimentation; instead of these two characteristics fighting for the listener's attention they give each other a proverbial high-five. Meandering guitar lines weave in and out of the listener's consciousness, electronic effects reinforce the melodies, and a firmly seated rhythm system supports everything—not cracking under the weight of innovation. It's always refreshing to discover a band that challenges the stagnation of the indie scene, and I'm hoping these lads brave the weather and make it to Ithaca again this year. **JB**

**Lightning Bolt "Ride The Skies" (Load) CD-** And on the day of the apocalypse, as fire and brimstone wreaked havoc on modern civilization, there stood, in the center of everything, a wall of amps, a drumset, and two masked individuals playing the perfect soundtrack to the world's chaotic end. Lightning Bolt cannot truly be understood until they have been seen live. They set up in the middle of the floor. They just carry their equipment out and play wherever they want. Won't they get lost in the crowd you ask? No, at least not with their ~8 foot wall of amps, and certainly not once their mesmerizing brand of Providence bass and drums scream noise rock hits you. The sound can best be described as rhythms and textures rather than music, but they somehow keep it interesting enough to have you on the edge of your seat, drumming and humming along despite the lack of any real melody. I feel the need to add that the vinyl comes with a beautiful multi-colored pastel screened cover. **AT**

**The Lillingtons "The Backchannel Broadcast" (Panic Button) CD-** The Lillingtons are

one of the few bands left around who are still playing interesting, traditional Ramones-y pop-punk. In a genre not known for its originality, somehow the Lillingtons have carved out their own niche. Their last album, "Death By Television," also their Panic Button debut, was an in-depth study of aliens attacking, outer space, and monsters. On this one, there are spies dealing with the cold war, with songs like "Final Transmission" and "The Russians Are Coming." The Lillingtons play Ramones-y pop punk, but have a sound all their own thanks to the vocals and dark songwriting by Kody. Not taking their time, they rattle off sixteen songs in 24 minutes. As their themes suggest, they are definitely on the darker side of pop-punk writing about spies and space invasion and monsters. I loved the Lillingtons' first two albums, but this one is a little too similar to the last one. That's not saying it's not good. Tracks like "One Armed Man" and "Wait It Out" (which was written by Ben Weasel) are as good as any others they have recorded, but there's nothing that really makes it stand out from the last album. The Lillingtons are one of the best pop punk bands around now, but I hope that they don't get stuck in this rut, and that they do something new in the future. **AT**

**Little Champions "Transactions + Replications" (Barsuk) CD-** No matter how many times I check the insert or how many people tell me, I will never believe that Corin Tucker of Sleater-Kinney does not sing for Little Champions. Even if it isn't Corin Tucker singing, you can be sure of one thing, this band is from the fertile pastures of the Pacific Northwest. They play tight math-rock (though I may be mis-using the term, as I failed the math section of my Punk SATs) with juicy breaks that'll have you rocking your head along in no time at all. Male/female vocals duel over the calculated instruments with Corin's stunt double going high and warbly, and her partner in crime going low and even. **AT**

**Lost Kids "Belle Isle is On Fire" (GSL) CDEP-** The first half of this four-song EP is almost perfectly emblematic of the rock revival currently taking Detroit by storm. "Where the Lost Kids Go," the opening track, is sleazy and raw, self-consciously retro without sounding derivative. The second track "Explode," is also a loud rocker with an unmistakably 70s slant to it. But after these two gems, the EP bogs down a bit and the band seems to lose the spirit of the New York Dolls that they capture so well the first time around. Good stuff, and definitely a band to watch (on Gold Standard Laboratories, which itself has been one of my favorite labels recently). But the Lost Kids might need a bit more practice and a few more ideas before they can really pull things off. **DF**

**Lou Rogai "Empty Throne" (Quicklife Juncture) CD-** Sitting on a weather-beaten park bench in Allentown, Pennsylvania, only sporting an acoustic guitar and black ski cap, a figure strums a



# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: *RS* | Jonah Bayer: *JB* | Jason Murphy: *JM* | du proserpio: *dup* | Adam Parks: *AP* |  
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# 11

chord. He looks around, grins, and commences to win over the crowd of teenagers with his honest and heartfelt songs that break up the monotony of the punk rock festival. Unlike, let's say, Kevin Seconds, there is nothing remotely punk rock about Lou Rogai's music; but he still seems like a vital player in the Pennsylvania punk scene. Why? Maybe it's because his songs are so good. Lou's style inevitably draws comparisons to the other bad boy of bittersweet ballads (try saying that five times fast), Elliot Smith. And while that goes along with the territory to an extent, Lou does tend to fall back on Smith's idiosyncrasies, a trait that will no doubt fade as he continues to develop his own voice. Speaking of voice, the strongest aspect of Lou's songwriting is that that he doesn't have to use his all of the time. Instrumental numbers such as "Stars Like These," with layers of rich guitar orchestration are just as interesting to listen to as the non-instrumental material, a rare feat in the town of cappuccino-ville. Keep an eye out for Lou Rogai because if this EP gets into the hands of the right people, there's no telling how big he could become. You heard it here first. **JB**

**Love Life "The Rose He Lied By" (Troubleman Unlimited) CD-** The credits for this album indicate the use of upwards of thirteen (13) instruments on this recording, and I spent most of the time waiting for any one of the auxiliaries (apart from guitar, bass, or drums) to do something worth while, to no avail. I am fortunate that I did not listen to this album while bathing, for surely I would have drowned. Each song is, on average, one (1) riff played for, on average, about seven (14 or 15) minutes. Who has this type of endurance? Surely, not I. The riffs don't really develop or culminate into anything of consequence, so what you're left with is a poorly recorded, poorly conceived set of seven or eight riffs, each one called a song and dragged to death. Sometimes in minimalist writing like this, you have to wait for moments, and sometimes the moments are gratifying and cause the rest of the song to make sense. But no such luck here. This is like the Murder City Devils without the Murder City. Or the Devils. I cannot continue to wait for moments. **AP**

**Malefaction "Crush the Dream" (G7) CD-** I think the artwork for this record says a lot. The cover is this gorgeously eerie painting with a very streamlined logo and band-name written below while outlined in gold ink. This must have cost a fortune to make. As for the band, they are political (in case you couldn't have guessed that based on the fact that they are on Propagandhi's label) grind-core. I must admit, I'm really not that familiar with grindcore, not nearly as much as I should be. But, from what I hear I like it. It's super fast, super technical, and super

loud. I imagine having a migraine headache while listening to this stuff would cause even an incredible physical specimen to go into convulsions. To me, you see, grindcore is intense and threatening to the max, but it also seems a bit dense—although that is probably because I could never in a million years play this fast with any accuracy. My only problem is that I don't see how any band with such blasts of screaming and rage. I'm not saying they should be playing pop, but perhaps some style of music where one wouldn't have to dig out the liner-notes to see what they were saying. At a show I think this would be amazing, but any message would fall on deaf ears. Can the world afford that? I guess Malefaction thinks it can. **RS**

**The Man I Fell In Love With "Dis Yourself" (Keystone-Ember) CD-** This band was obviously named with the sole purpose of getting people to say things like, "I'm going to see The Man I Fell In Love With tonight" or "are you into The Man I Fell In Love With?" And then it's "No, silly, I mean the band by that name!" and everyone has quite a laugh indeed. But the music is certainly no laughing matter, since we all know that quirky pop with peripheral keyboards and catchy, gently sung vocals with a touch of distortion on them (which at first was mistaken for poor poor recording quality) is a serious thing. Still more serious, though, is the problem of the ratio of band members to instruments. There are only three people, and it says that the guitar and bass players also play keyboards. Every time you hear a keyboard part on the album, there is also a guitar and bass part. Conundrum! The guitar and bass parts, though simple, intertwine well as counterpoints, but I can't help thinking it might sound a little empty without the keyboard stuff. They should ask the man I fell in love with if he could play keyboards for them... wait, damn it, I played right into their hands. **NT**

**Man of the Year "The Future is Not Now" (Tiny Beat) CD-** It's tough to say no to fun and simple indie pop with sweet vocals and a decent helping of keyboards. And it's not that I'm going to say no, it's just that there's very little about this album that makes me want to come back for more. Sure, while I'm sitting here, I'm bouncing to the rock numbers and swooning to the lighter fare (can I swoon, is that allowed?), but then the CD finishes and I move on without looking back. As far as what it sounds like, we're talking Sloan-like rockers with a heavy emphasis on some nice synth parts and not as much classic rock influence mixed with some emotional/somber songs throughout to make the rock songs hit you even harder. What do I know, this might be yr soundtrack of the summer; it won't be mine, but that shouldn't stop you. **JM**

**Man Without Plan "I Feel Badly" (Creep) CD-** This appears to be the second album by MWP, one of the few successful Westchester NY bands. Lead singer and guitarist is Barclay Mitchell, who is probably best known for the hilarious A Punk Kid Walks Into A Bar zine. Just as with their first album, "Shop Talk," there is enough substance to their music to make it sink in slowly and virtually attach itself to your skin. Yeah, it could probably be considered pop punk, but the emphasis is not on pop here. It's basically punk rock with a melodic sensibility as well as a link to guitar-driven hardcore. You might get out of tune singing with backups, but you can bet your ass there will be some full bore screaming in there as well.

Their sound is full of quick time changes and power chords but in the fog of it all it ends up being catchy and infectious. What it doesn't end up being is derivative. Just like the last album, it demanded multiple listens and grew on me a lot. Here the band is much tighter (they alternate drummers on this record) and the songs are more engaging the first time around. Former fans of pop-punk should check this out. It's interesting enough to listen to repeatedly and it's still got the tuneful bedrock intact. Includes a great dubbed-out punk cover of the Police's "Walking On The Moon" and a nice vocal grab from Fletch. One more record and these cats oughta be massive. **dup**

**Martyr AD "The Human Condition in Twelve Fractions" (Ferret) CD-** I've said it before and I will say it again: technically being able to play does not mean that you are good. Particularly in terms of metal, just because you can play a guitar solo fast or do a drum solo, it doesn't mean you should. It just means that you have memorized your learning materials (be it a book or your favorite Black Sabbath record) but have yet to put an individual spin on the material. Having one's own voice is more important than having technical chops. Oh yeah, so this is seriously metal, with the yelps, growls, "weedley-weedley" guitars, and double bass. Guessing you have heard something similar to this before? You would be right, there is nothing new here. **JM**

**Me First And The Gimme Gimmes "Blow In The Wind" (Fat Wreck) CD-** More from this project that again drives the fact home that all pop-punk fans really want is melodies melodies melodies. I wonder if musical catchiness triggers the same feeling as nostalgia? Covers of "Wild World", "Who Put The Bomp", "Stand By Your Man", and of course, "Blowin' In The Wind". Yeah, it's not bad, especially if you still dig "punk rock covers" and think the crooning of vocal standards is still funny. They do get bonus points for installing some Ramones into a Beach Boys song and rearranging "Eleanor" with the "London's Burning" riff. This is their third record and they sure have a ton of overplayed hits left that they haven't yet done. The Shriners cover shot is always worth a chuckle. Still, I find this stuff ultimately girlish and want to go listen to Sheer Terror. **dup**

**The Mercury Program "All the Suits Began to Fall Off" (Tiger Style) CD-** When I reviewed the Mercury Program's second LP, "From the Vapor of Gasoline", I thought their sound really needed a pick-me-up. All of their arrangements were tight and mathy, but they never possessed enough energy to ever sound interesting. This 5-song CD is a noted improvement over their past efforts because they place more emphasis on dynamic shifts that actually provide rollercoaster ups and downs. "The Secret to Quiet" is a spellbinding trip through cyclical guitar patterns and layers of vibraphone played by new member, Whitney Travisano. The Mercury Program build upon pinpoint accurate guitars and flowing basslines to create intense moments of contemplation. Since each song takes longer to sink in than listen to, repeated listens remains an important element of their music. **JBC**

**Milemarker "Anesthetic" (Jade Tree) CD-** People say that Milemarker are doing something different. I would say they are but in this case it may be falling on deaf ears. While this

North Carolina outfit has some tunes that would fall under the typical punk category a la the rest of Jade

Tree's more eclectic roster, some of them just seem a bit too out there for me to grasp or hold onto after the CD is over. The keyboards, played in a really annoying my-first-Casio tone, seem to be the prime melody maker, and I fear that too often the band is searching for ways to bring the rest of the instruments up to this level. It's as if they are trying to develop sounds and moods just to fit them in, instead of whether or not they work at any given point in the song. Also, too often Milemarker tends to lose the songs. In other words, the song runs away from any cohesive structure, like the song is writing the band instead of the band writing the song. I see this in certain parts of certain songs when the music will suddenly take a left turn that it probably should not have. Some might find this to be daring and experimental, I find it to be the cause of an acute sense of irritation I experience when this CD is playing. For once, I have to say that something on Jade Tree is definitely overrated. If this is the most creative and daring the underground has to offer, then the mainstream has no chance at all. **RS**

**Moods For Moderns "Loud and Clear" (Doghouse) CD-** If they had compact disc technology in 1976, this is what it would look and sound like. I have to give props to Doghouse, because this looks unbelievably authentic. The faded colors, the denim jackets, everything down to the font looks legit... and I haven't even started to talk about the music yet. For those of who don't know, Moods for Moderns didn't crawl out of a time machine with Bill and Ted, but feature two members of the largely underrated and now defunct Detroit emo band, Empire State Games. While I do like ESG, I have to admit that being in it does take away a bit from Moods for Moderns' retro-cred, but their songs are so well written, that we won't hold that against them. This album is full of classic rock gems: packed with killer harmonies, an edgy analog sound, and more vintage organs than a funeral home. Unfortunately the problem with "Loud and Clear," is that maybe it's too authentic. Throughout the CD there are random pops and hisses that are really annoying and make you wonder why Moods for Moderns picked a place called "Ghetto Recorders," to record their first full-length. Here's a tip guys, you get what you pay for. Technical difficulties aside, this is an excellent debut and if you have the chance to see these guys live don't miss out. The last time I saw them play in Cleveland, the guitar player stood on top of the bass drum, lost his balance, ended up literally entangled in the drum set, and recovered without missing a beat. Now that's rock n' roll. **JB**

**The Mother Hips "Green Hills of Earth" (Future Farmer) CD-** "Everyone knows rock attained perfection in 1972; it's a scientific fact." Homer Simpson may be a little off with such a broad generalization (rock music has never been perfect), but he does point out that there is something about early '70s rock, particularly of the cock rock vein. The anthems, the guitar solos, the slightly lame lyrics, the nod to both the psychedelic and the heavy metal, and the need to just throw your lighter in the air and wave it like you just don't care. The Mother



# 21

Hips are shopping in the same grungy vintage clothes stores as bands like Sloan and Teenage Fanclub, finding melodies and riffs from the Beatles, Zeppelin, the Stones, and KISS and making them their own. Where as bands like the atrocious Black Crowes flat out copy, The Mother Hips lovingly borrow and that makes all the difference. Yeah, so you need a black light to listen to this stuff, I'm on board. How can you not like a genre that is referred to as "cock rock"? **JM**

**The Mr. T Experience "The Miracle of Shame" (Lookout!) CDEP-** I grew up on MTX. They are still one of my favorite bands, which is why I consider the saddest moment in punk rock the day Dr. Frank decided that he needed a fuller sound and picked up a keyboard player. That keyboard player ruined a great band. I mean, hat would the punk world have done if Ramones, or hell, Green Day, decided to acquire a keyboard player? Exactly. I saw them in the fall, and they were without the keyboard player and sounded more punk than they have since the days of Jon Von, so there is hope for the future. Unfortunately, this album was recorded during the cheesy pop-rock lineup. The high point is "Mr. Ramones" which showcases Dr. Franks famed tongue-in-cheek wit with lines like "Hi, I'm Mr. Ramones/Ramones as I can be/since 1979, when I was only three/I should get a medal just for being me/Ramones are God, and I'm the only one who knows." He skillfully mocks the pop-punk genre of which he's been a figurehead. **AT**

**The Multiple Cat "The Golden Apple Hits" (Plow City) CD-** I remember this band from the late, sometimes-great Zero Hour label. The biggest memory I have was the minimal subtlety that the band seems to weave into all their work. The Multiple Cat play erratic pop, not exactly quirky as much as unpredictable. It has a lot of quiet parts to it, and plenty of keys and piano. But basslines come out from nowhere and the haunted vocals sort of get draped over the whole structure. There's still a certain moodiness here that falls right into place in the world of lonesome, emotional pop. This slightly skewed indie pop sound doesn't really come together in any kind of motive. There's no straight line in the styles on this album, which makes sense when you find out that this is a collection of songs from a few years, that serves as a second album. Notable-"The Dipstik Tryptych (sic) Pt. 1", not just for the name, but for the sub-sleazy Bowie/Stardust feel it exudes. A decent distraction, and if they wanted to, they might have almost had a single there. If the quiet and mysterious is for you.... **dup**

**Murphy's Law "The Best Of Times/Good For Now" (Ng/Artemis) CD-**  
**Murphy's Law "The Party's Over" (Artemis) CD-** Hey, my day just got a whole lot better. For the uninitiated, Murphy's Law manages to be one of the longest standing original NYHC outfits (older than SOIA), rigidly individual (how many bands poured beer on crowds with the Beastie Boys in '85 and are still spraying suds?) and more fun live than most bands can aspire to. The last time I saw Murphy's Law they ran up to the base of Mount Snow and set up to play impromptu at the bottom of the lift. Twenty minutes later not only was there a flock of people dancing in the snow, but the band

passed all their instruments to a quartet of 8-year-olds to let them play. You literally cannot avoid having some fun when they're on stage. First we have a welcome reissue of their obscure third album, "The Best Of Times" from 1991, coupled with 1993's stopgap EP "Good For Now." "The Best Of Times" is a hell of a surprise, mostly because it's not what you'd expect from the band at all. After their jokey first album and tougher second record, this record sounds like real progress. Its production is credited to 2 members of Fishbone, but that's not nearly good enough. "The Best Of Times" is essentially a collaboration between Fishbone and Murphy's Law. That means horns, a bold punch of soul and a heaping dose of accelerated songwriting as well. There's a cover of "Ebony And Ivory" here! "Good For Now" is a perfect title- the EP sounds like something just to sell on tour during the big gap between albums. You have an early (read- ok) version of the great "Stay Gold", a live rendition of "Crucial Bar-B-Que" and 3 others. The record flexes a bit of ML's classic reggae/ska infusion with the timely addition of Jeff "King Django" Baker and Danny Dulin- 2 ubiquitous NY ska players. A worthy addition to the collection, as it sits nicely next to the Another Planet disc compiling the first 2 Murphy's albums. Fans will want it for the live staples "Tight", "Did You Play War?", and "Beer Bath." "The Party's Over" is a new album from Jimmy Drescher and a new bunch of mugs. Here Jimmy delivers an album laced with the tough rumble of NY hardcore (the classic metallic ML sound) with a sound that relies more on latter-day punk melodies to bind together their anthems. Whereas some tracks could do without the overtly poppy backups, it's something of a logical step from 1996's "Dedicated." The diehards maybe disappointed at points, but remember that this is the AC/DC of hardcore- a band that puts its energy into being perfectly juvenile and endlessly hedonistic. The newer formula works on "Vicky Crown" and "Maximum Lie" where Jimmy's tenured vocals prove that he's nothing if not versatile. There's plenty of speedy crunch on this album as well as a ska-punk track that miraculously sounds good even now. And the band's live rendition of Symarip's reggae classic "Skinhead Girl" finally finds a home here. The reissue could not have come at a better time- between the two discs you see how much this furious family of hardcore knuckleheads is actually capable of. Even if Murphy's is only dropping albums as footnotes to their touring fanbase, they continue to distill an aura that's as pure and fun-loving as it is rare these days. **dup**

**MXPX "The Renaissance EP" (Fat Wreck) CD-** I think Fat Mike is a sell-out. While I commend Mr. Mike on not signing to a major and keeping his indie integrity intact, I must say that the guy who was the impetus behind me and my friends driving around in high school shouting the words to "the Brews" at the top of our lungs releasing the biggest Christian punk band in the nation's newest record has sold out. Mr. Mike, what would your mother think? Making a buck off goyem? For shame. Anyways, ever since I started this zine I have been completely oblivious to mainstream music. I generally know the names, but I never know the music. I just heard Outkast last week for godssake. So, I've heard of MXPX before but I had never heard their music. MXPX, for those with their heads in the ground like me, are pop-punk, plain and simple. On this 7 song disc they feature everything from hardcore beats, to organs, to Green Day type harmonies. Overall, this is nothing special at all. It's well done, tight, and kind of catchy (and thank God there's none of that awful "praise the lord" stuff I was fearing), but I don't hear anything that gets me

really excited... like the first time I heard Green Day or NOFX. The songs are good while they're on, but they don't stay with the listener after the stereo has been turned off. Green Day, and even the great NOFX, would have you screaming their songs while walking down the street for the next year and a half. This, however, get old really really quick. But, I imagine for the Christian rock world this is head and shoulders above the rest. What's next, Fat Wreck, a DC Talk discography? **RS**

**Nation of Ulysses "The Embassy Tapes" (Dischord) CD-** It's funny, I always loved Nation of Ulysses and never really understood why the punk masses forgot about them so quickly. I mean, bands like Rye Coalition and At the Drive-in are virtual carbon copies of this band in everything from synopated guitar licks to stage presence to general presentation. I am happy to say that unlike so many other "great" bands I actually witnessed the Nation of Ulysses academy firsthand, and let me tell you it was a sight to behold. While bands like The Fucking Champs and the Make-up have given NOU's members latter-day music careers, Dischord felt that a recently discovered recording of their so-called final album was a necessity for a new release. And, I have to agree. There are so many bands that rip-off NOU on a song-to-song basis, that a little history lesson courtesy of DC's finest is no doubt a necessity. So, here we have 10 hip-grating, trumpet-layered tunes that-- true to NOU form-- sound like shit, are played like shit, and make you want to fucking dance your pants off. I'm not sure if this recording is as poignant or as seminal as their incredible "13 Point Plan to Destroy America" record, but if some kid in San Diego who thinks the Locust invented punk rock style picks this up and wakes up, then this record is more than worth it. **RS**

**No Motiv "Diagram for Healing" (Vagrant) CD-** I'll be honest, somehow this CD was misplaced; I vaguely remember putting it in a random jewel case and tossing it aside a few months ago. Now my bookshelf and its 300 CD's is looming over me, saying, "Go ahead Jonah, open up all of these cases just to find No Motiv. I dare you." Well, I'm not going to give my bookshelf the satisfaction; instead, I'm going to listen to album's opener, "Celebration" over and over on my handy Vagrant sampler. It's an upbeat and motivational number, with a chorus of, "Celebrate, another day. Celebrate the century." Celebrate indeed! This song is a tad more upbeat than most Vagrant material, but has the same can't-get-it-out-of-your-head melody and biting hooks that we've come to expect from the label. It follows the typical rock song format: verse, catchy chorus, verse, with an occasional cliched scream of "go!" -and therein lies the problem. No Motiv's style is formulaic- they have the talent, but they don't have the character of their peers: No murder fantasies a la Saves The Day, nor the horns n' attitude of Rocket From the Crypt. No Motiv are going to need to develop their own sound if they ever want to be serious contenders for the punk rock heavyweight division. But then again, what do I know? I just had a conversation with my bookshelf. **JB**

**Nora "Loser's Intuition" (Trustkill) CD-** Never, ever, under any circumstances write out your lyrics and follow them up with an extra little paragraph explaining what the lyrics are about. Please. Listeners deserve a little bit more credit and a little bit more interpretive freedom. Your songs are not that profound or interesting

anyway. I got three records from Trustkill and this is the best one. That is why I am so sad. Nora rocks Trustkill brand hardcore music with kind of a moderate-weight mix, but it's admirable that they didn't succumb to the "we need eight overdubbed guitars in order to sound very heavy" production that has become so popular. The guitars offer lots of chugs with a smattering of harmonized riffs, and drop into some great open chord breaks. Vocals are screamy. The earlier songs on the album are kind of slow to develop, but the album as a whole gets gradually better toward the middle. This is definitely a CD for hardcore fanatics of the newer school. **AP**

**No Use for a Name "Live in a Dive" (Fat Wreck) CD-** Why did I get this for review? No one deserves this. This is a No Use for a Name live album. If you know who No Use for a Name is, then you know that this idea never should have come to fruition. You know that even though the idea did come to fruition, someone should have had the sense and decency to stop it before it became physically manifest. And you know that even though it arrived, incamate, in my post office box, I should not have to actually listen to it. I think we've covered all the bases here. **AP**

**The Orange "Big Space Mission" (Wednesday) CDEP-** It's important to know that this straight-up power pop band utilizes a chorus on the first track with the word "rigamarole" in it. Very little assumptions here, but solid and occasionally interesting angular guitar melodies. My first impression is that this band might take their power-pop style to a higher plane. There's some slow parts and arranging that don't exactly sound obvious. Quality power pop is a very good thing, but it's not a format that demands originality. "Filibuster" is a great edgy guitar blowout, and the next track "Young Amphibians" takes down the house lights for a skilled, serene track with no less catchy appeal. The next track sparkles with a western-swing inflection and brash guitar bridges. Four very clean studio tracks and one live track (also superbly recorded) at the last pure rock joint in America- Valentines in Albany, NY. An excellent debut EP, and worth the time of the power-pop contingent. **dup**

**Orange Island "Shape of Calling" (Iodine) CD-** This album sucks and I'll tell you why. There are no ideas here. This is formulaic emo rock, stolen from Gameface, who stole it from Texas Is The Reason. I don't know who Texas stole it from, but maybe you do. The production of this album is great. The actual songs that were produced are not so great. The vocals used to sing the words to the songs are totally, one hundred percent not great. When you take a great idea and make it suck, that's worse than having a sucky idea in the first place. When you take a great idea and make it suck, and then take it again and make it suck even more...that's just sad. **AP**



# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: *RS* | Jonah Bayer: *JB* | Jason Murphy: *JM* | du proserpio: *dup* | Adam Parks: *AP* |  
Jonah Brucker-Cohen: *JBC* | Adam Thorman: *AT* | Nick Tamburro: *NT* | Dan Frantic: *DF*

# 13

**Osker "Idle Will Kill" (Epitaph) CD-** This album was mixed by Rob Schnapf, the knob-twister behind Saves The Day's latest slab o' wax, "Don't Change Who You Are." Needless to say, there are many parallels between these bands-- whining about girls, infectious pop-punk ditties, and yeah, I guess the two guys who make up this group are pretty 'dreamy.' However there is a rougher edge to Osker; they are Saves the Day pre-castration, if you will (and believe or not, I like STD). The band's vocalist/guitarist, Devon's voice isn't as pretty as Chris Conley's, and reminds me more of John Samson's (from the Weakerthans') slightly-out-of-key whine; but there is a healthy dichotomy between the music-- simplistic power-chords augmented by upper register noodlings-- and Devon's not-so-perfect voice. It makes everything more believable; life isn't perfect, and neither is Osker's music. Is this just a fancy way of saying that Osker's singer has a bad voice? Maybe. But I'm glad to see Epitaph taking a risk on this instead of putting out another album featuring ex-members of The Joykiller or (insert washed up So-Cal punk band here). **JB**

**The Others "Magic Bullet Fan CD Series Vol. 2" (Magic Bullet) CD single-** This CD caught my attention because it is clear where there is no music. It's something that not many bands do that is simple and looks really nice. The Others (beyond having a good eye for visual presentation of a CD) are a pretty decent hardcore band with emo tendencies. I guess my only gripe would be that the lead singer never seems to change in dynamics, while the music goes from tender to jagged in a short time. C'mon, when everyone else is ripping it up, I want to hear the lead singer be right there with them! Anyway, this band does its thing well and this is a nice introduction that hopefully points to bigger and better things. **JM**

**Outline "A Boy Can Dream" (Triple Crown) CD-** This insert contains 25 pictures of the band, a number exactly equivalent to the number of shots one might fire into their stereo-phonetic system, weaponry permitting, in order that they might never have to be subjected to Outline again. This is a confused high school caliber pop-punk band with episodes of "Ooh, maybe we're a hardcore band", "Ooh, maybe we're NOFX", and "Ooh, maybe emo is still a legitimate genre that can get us girls in the bed". The music is not complex, but it is busy, with instruments cutting in and out to throw you for a loop. That much is okay. Lay on the dry and uninspired vox with their dry and uninspired heartbreak lyrics and you've got one forgettable record. It would be okay with me if this record was widely distributed in Outline's home town. **AP**

**Over My Dead Body "No Runners" (Indecision) CD-** I hated this CD when I got it from Ross and Jonah, as some kind of initiation/punishment. First of all, the band name. Second, the cover has a horrible drawing of 5 skeletons (one for each band member) wearing hoodies with X'd up hands. Third, some of the most stereotypical Straight Edge pride lyrics I've ever read. Before I ever heard them I knew exactly what they sounded like, and what I thought of it. I went into this review thinking that I was going to write something like "I can't understand why people still feel the need to make this stuff, after all this time, what's the point, etc. etc." Then I popped it in, and I remembered what the point was. Fun. It's definitely not setting any new musical standards (or living up to any old ones), but I could feel how much fun it is to be at a show like this. You know all the words, and so does pretty much everyone in the crowd, and you sing and jump around. The songs are mercifully short, although "Drug Free Adult" felt a little long at 24 seconds. I'll never listen to this again, but it made me smile. **NT**

**Owls (Jade Tree) CD-** The good news -- for most of you, at least -- is that Owls are essentially indie rock supergroup Cap'n Jazz under a new name. I say "most" because I count myself among the admittedly fairly small minority of people who never got what the big deal was about Cap'n Jazz in the first place. While the Cap'n Jazz offshoot Joan of Arc at least includes some creative experimentation amongst their noodly jams and self-congratulatory musical tomfoolery, Owls are pretty much back-to-basics indie/emo with all the elements that made the genre so unpalatable to begin with: warbly vocals, tinny guitars, lyrics that kind of mean something but probably don't. This isn't beyond redemption and it does have a couple nice songs, notably "Anyone Can Have a Good Time," but I can't see what it is that makes these guys so legendary in so many people's minds -- and yes, I've heard all the old Cap'n Jazz stuff a million times, including their unconscionable butchery of A-Ha's "Take On Me." If you want something better in the same family of bands I'd check out Ghosts and Vodka instead. **DF**

**Pale "Rassmatazz" (Defiance) CD-** There's nothing like listening to people that are inspired by a particular artist, genre, or moment in time and deciding that they too have to create art. I can think of very little music these days that is created in a vacuum (though I can think of three records that feature vacuum cleaners), so everything is touched by what came before. The key, though, is to an influence or host of influences, mash it around with personal experience and other interests, and produce something new and interesting. Pale decided to listen to bands like Jimmy Eat World and the Promise Ring and play them basically note for note and hope that people would bite. Unfortunately for Pale, people are content with a dozen bands that play this type of emo, why do they need one more? I need something new. **JM**

**Pale Skeeter "In Spite of Self" (Close to Nothing) CD-** Ah the bliss of being in high school-- or college as the case may be. A band can play for the sheer joy of playing. They don't have to worry about touring, record sales, or paying the rent off the cash generated by their music. This freedom from monetary restraints gives any artist the luxury of doing what they want to do and not having to please anyone other than themselves.

There are obvious benefits and drawbacks to this viewpoint. Among others, a band, like Pale Skeeter for instance, has a sound that is immature and sometimes juvenile (as are shown in their songs about something called a "snackpack" and their 10 second ode to Britney Spears), their lyrics are obviously inexperienced and not terribly sophisticated, and the recording is surely not as good as one of the bigger pop-punk labels could afford them. With that said, Pale Skeeter show promise and all hope is not lost on this record reviewer. Hey, every band has to start somewhere and it's not as if Pale Skeeter suck... 'cause their hodge-podge of punk, pop, hardcore, and emo (in the lyrics) can be quite endearing at times. I imagine that in about 3 or 4 years Pale Skeeter will be a force to be reckoned with. Now, however, they are not quite ready to play with the big boys. See you when you get some pubes. **RS**

**Paul Newman "Re-issue! Re-Package! Re-Package! Re-Evaluate the Songs" (My Pal God) CD-** Does anyone know if this band has a fan club? If they do, I want to be the president. My Pal God-- a label I hadn't heard of until this issue-- sent us three releases this issue: Paul Newman, Drums & Tuba, and Emperor Penguin; all of which have all turned out to be some of the best music I've heard since Bruce Dickinson re-joined Iron Maiden. The first two tracks of "Re-issue!" reminded me of the instrumental meanderings of Tristeza, with more variation and subtle nuances. I can just picture the guitarist of this band, head down, as he sparsely strums lush guitar chords over the arpeggiated basslines and rich instrumentation. These guys should take a hint from Tristeza and try to get on the Urban Outfitters playlist too. But just as Paul Newman began to lull me to sleep, the third track, "Beeline to Mamou" came rumbling through my speakers, with a riff straight off Coalesce's last record and vocals frighteningly reminiscent of Harvest. Believe or not, Paul Newman pulls off this style just as convincingly, if not better than their instrumental space-jams. Delay driven guitars squeal as the drums pound off-time rhythms, initiating a relentless groove of mullet-banging exhilaration. I could analyze this entire album, song by song, talking about how this band tackles a myriad of genres with unbelievable proficiency and originality. But unfortunately, I have a stack of CD's in front of me, all of which face the arduous task of following up Paul Newman. So do yourself a favor, instead of eating or getting gas or paying your rent or whatever stupid thing you were going to waste your money on, pick up this album, relax, and let them blow your mind. **JB**

**Pavo/Rhythm of Black Lines "Home Vol. 3" (Post-Parlo) Split CD-** In this much-delayed third installment of the "Home" series of split CDs, Austin label Post-Parlo pairs two largely instrumental Texas bands, the two-person Pavo and the more frenetic Rhythm of Black Lines. Pavo, who open the CD with two fairly long and meandering instrumental songs, come across as quieter and more conservative, at times sounding like a less spacey Tristeza. RoBL take a more adventurous approach to their three songs, using tinny, electronic-sounding drums on "Set a Summery Table" and actually dropping some warbly vocals in the brilliantly named "Austin, Texas Will be Devoured Then Passed Through the Bowels of a Heavy Set Arabian Camel." I'm not sure how well these two bands are matched, despite

their more superficial similarities; Pavo are much slower and frankly less engaging, while RoBL play with more urgency and bombast. **DF**

**Pilots V. Airplanes "Our Desire is Wind and Motor" (Goodbye Blue Skies) CD-** A nagging part of me wants to pan this record as sounding too much like the Get Up Kids. But their "experimental" song (the one that is sort of jammy and includes samples) is not really up to snuff. Still, it's hot and I'm not in the mood to pan a band, particularly one that passed the test of making me forget how nasty it is outside. And yeah, I am a sucker for emo bands that pour it on heavy sometimes (both in the emo sense and in the rock sense). I also like what the keyboard adds to their sound; if anything, it pulls it away from being a generic emo band (though not away from Get Up Kids references). I'm willing to bet this is even better in the spring, when hearts turn to love and emo kids start to mope and write songs like these. All kidding around (emo is so easy to pick on), this is pretty good, and deserves a spin or two. **JM**

**Playing Enemy "" (Escape Artist) CD-** Yawn! Escape Artist may be falling into a hole that labels like Big Wheel and Initial have fallen into: they started with a bang and then they started putting out any band that plays a similar style to the other bands on the roster. Isis, Bum it Down, and Time in Malta got me more than excited about this label, Keelhaul, Anodyne, and Playing Enemy seem to be spitting out the same old stuff though. Musically, these ex-members of the great Seattle hardcore band, Undertow, have made a record with a distinct amalgamation of Botch, Coalesce, and Anodyne. The first two bands were pioneers, the last was still doing something cool, this band is re-hashing. They do it well, mind you, but I have at least 15 other CDs in my collection that inspired this one. I don't have any more room for this type of stuff. **RS**

**The Poor Rich Ones "Happy Happy Happy" (Five-One) CD-** There is a specter haunting rock and roll; the specter of bands that wish they were Radiohead. I suppose it's not fair to accuse a band of aspiring to that end just because they produce the dickens out of an album, throw in EQed-out techno-y parts, chamber parts, and a bit of artistic credibility, but it sure is easy. All of the aforementioned elements are present on "Happy Happy Happy," leaving Radiohead the closest comparison available. The difference being, when you take all of those things away from Radiohead, you are left with nothing. When you take them from the Poor Rich Ones, you are left with a nauseating pop album, fit to be the soundtrack to the worst of America's sappy teen dramas. Not the TV ones, but the full-length motion pictures. Any one of these songs would be perfect for the part in the end where the main boy and the main girl are at their respective homes and they realize at the same time that they are in love with each other, so they both get gussied up and go to the dance anyway and they find each other in the crowd and everything turns out wonderfully. They will probably kiss on the mouth at 3:17 on track 4. **Happy Happy Happy. AP**



# 41

**The Postage Era**  
**"Fatal Autopsy"**  
 (Actiondriver) CD-  
 Hmm, multiple  
 vocals and lots of  
 arty guitar tones. It's  
 still rock, but thank-  
 fully "rocking" is not

on the menu. Prepare for a jazz bridge, followed by a hard sideline of discordant yelling and stark playing. Off the bat this reminds me of Les Savy Fav, the more chaotic side of Disemberment Plan and even some of that DC stuff like Nation Of Ulysses. Whoops- looks like this is a Zientara-affiliated production. I know there's still something melodic underneath all the drones and screams. This is nervous, brooding stuff with one guy shouting and another whispering at the same time. It's got loads of different textures as well as some tension-building drums to provide a nice meter to the vocal fireworks. And out of the pathos of the track, where you think it can't get any more disjointed and messy, there comes the life preserver (usually in the form of a clean guitar repeating riff) to tow your ass above water again. It's nice to hear something that really warrants multiple listens from the first spin. Interesting enough for your friends who are already in bands and not too over-your-head if you're not that "discriminating." **dup**

**Potential Getaway Driver** "Fire, Ice, and Lukewarm Water" (Pop Riot) CD- These guys look nice. You know, date your sister, take home to your parents, trust with your peanut butter and banana sandwich nice. They even thank Def Leppard and Iron Maiden in the insert, which has got to be good for something. And most importantly, they seem to be genuinely into and dedicated to rocking the pop punk thing. This is not stupid, snotty, or sophomoric; this is tried and true pop punk just like they made a few years ago. This is good for what it is: fun pop punk that some of you will probably go crazy over while the rest of us realize that these type of bands are increasingly a dime a dozen. I would say it's compliment, though, to be good and above the much of the dreck. **JM**

**Powerhouse** "What Lies Ahead" (Resurrection AD) CD- There is a reason AFI made a concerted, if subtle, effort to distance themselves from the whole Oakland Brand Hardcore thing that first reared its ugly head in the mid-'90s. That reason, put simply, is because AFI is a very good band that does not do anything typically done in hardcore. But, bands like Second Coming, All Bets Off, and Powerhouse-- who ardently claim OBHC whenever they can-- weren't smart enough to follow AFI's lead. Instead, a band like Powerhouse is a terrible Sick of it All cum Madball rip-off that combines idiotic lyrics about standing tall and being a man (and other asinine bullshit) with melodies that owe far more to the thug-core of New York City circa 1992 than to AFI or Screw 32. This sucks, and the artwork is embarrassingly poor which just adds salt to the wounds. **RS**

**Proudentall** "What's Happening Here" (Caulfied) CD- There is a reason boring font-faces like "Times New Roman" and "Verdana" and the totally ridiculous "Helvetica" were made. No, it was not to keep your computer subdued in a state of permanent banality until you shelled out the \$50 for a new set of fonts. And, no it wasn't because our parents are so nostalgic for the days of type-writers and slide-rules (what-ever the hell a slide-rule is). Rather, those fonts were created because they were clean, simple,

and utterly and totally readable. Sure they're a bit prosaic, but hey, so is the television and look how much America loves that thing! The reason I led you on that journey of semantics is because I don't have the press-sheet for this record handy. Combine that with the fact that the font that this band used on their record was absolutely the most unreadable of fonts in a scripty-handwriting sort of way. Put the font over a bunch of cubist paintings and it equals everyone's favorite zine editor not being able to be sure if he spelled the band's name right or if the record is called what I said it was. Okay, onto the music. It's indie rock played in a very mathy way that those midwesterners are so fond of. I'm actually pretty sure we got this for review a few issue ago on a different label, but to the best of my memory this is the first time it's actually been reviewed. I used it as background music then and nothing has changed. Sometimes rocking, sometimes quirky and artsy, always background music. The ninth song is straight out of the Dave Matthews songbook, complete with violin and hip-gyrating bassline. The 10th song is easily the most interesting work on the CD: sort of a mish-mosh of sound and samples and backward guitars. **RS**

**Pseudo Heroes** "Betraying Angry Thoughts" (Theologian) CD- Okay, this album may have the worst cover I have ever seen. Who knows. It is a bunch of blue cartoon faces with stitches and no eyes hovering over some fire and the name of the band. I don't think that description quite captures how bad the cover is, but it gives you some idea of what it looks like. Just imagine it really bad. But then imagine my surprise when I put the CD in and it was great. Can you picture it? I was truly surprised! My first thought was that it sounded a lot like the Descendents, similar production and musical style. What sets this CD apart is the lyrics, poetic and insightful, pleasantly sung over not too poppy punk rock. You kind of have to adjust to the quality of the recording, but once you do, you're in for an engaging and uplifting sojourn through the magical world of non-abrasive punk. **AP**

**Pylon** (Subjugation) CD- If there's a contender to Blake Schwarzenbach's throne, it may just be Pylon's vocalists, who sing both together and in unison to produce a gritty yet melodic sound that is well-suited to the band's emo-pop. It may be their British origins (I've always had a special place in my heart for pop-punk bands from the UK -- Broccoli and Wat Tyler, for example), but Pylon seems to have a relatively fresh approach towards a genre of music that, to be entirely honest, has been looking a little stale and wilted these days. When the band's songwriting chops evolve to equal their vocal talents, Pylon will be a band to watch. **DF**

**Q and not U** "No Kill No Beep Beep" (Dischord) CD- Given the label's history, it's easy to write off every band on Dischord as a Fugazi-clone. It's especially easy to categorize the Q and Not U this way since Dischord-guru Ian MacKaye produced their album. But as I said in my interview with the band, they don't fit the D.C. mold. The duo of guitarists/singers Harris Klahr and Chris Richards complement each other in a myriad of ways; trading off their distinct vocal duties as they trade off guitar parts: in a blur of unorthodox chords, odd time signatures, and rhythmic manipulations of feedback. It's amazing how layered this album is considering that the band only use the standard instrumentation of two guitars, bass, and drums. While the music has a frantic element to it, like it could fall apart at any moment, it also remains strangely danceable. Not in that MTV Grind "Thong Song" sort

of way, but a more abstract phenomenon that will make even the staunchest scenester bust a move. Re-reading the first part of this review, maybe I was wrong about the Q and Not U not fitting the D.C. mold. Although they don't directly sound like any other bands, isn't the D.C. ethic all about breaking out of the mold? **JB**

**Quasi** "The Sword of God" (Touch and Go) CD- "Fuck Hollywood," the opening song on Portland duo Quasi's fifth full-length album, starts off as a perfect facsimile of a "Baby Britain"-style Elliott Smith pop song -- not a huge surprise considering that Quasi member Sam Coomes has played with Smith in the past -- before veering off into an atonal squall of free-jazz saxophone. The rest of the album is similarly rooted in classic pop sensibilities, yet surprisingly iconoclastic. Gone, for the most part, are the melancholy waltzes that characterized Quasi's last album, "Field Studies." They've been replaced by a more upbeat and spunky tone that almost sounds like early Elvis Costello, had he grown up in Portland in the mid-'90's. I'd always viewed Quasi as a bit of a hipsters-only band, largely because of their connections to Elliott Smith and Sleater-Kinney, but this album showcases a brilliant songwriting duo that, at long last, has really come into top form. **DF**

**The Queers** "Today" (Lookout!) CDEP- How many times can a band put out the same record? Joe Queer seems to think the answer to this question is as many times as I want. I think I can vouch for the rest of the world when I say that I'm pretty sick of it. The good thing is that he has decided to start remaking the Lookout albums full of Beach Boys' oohs and ahhs and even a Beach Boys cover. He even decided to rip off several "Love Songs" era songs to create the tune "Yeah, Well, Whatever." We get the picture already! This EP picks up where "Don't Back Down" left off. Buy it if you are 15 and haven't yet heard the Queers. **AT**

**Randy** "The Human Atom Bombs" (Burning Heart) CD- When's the last time you listened to Crass? Forget about your punk cred and try to remember. Chances are, it's been years. While Crass' revolutionary political ideals were no doubt influential and groundbreaking, everyone knows their music, well, blows. What does this have to do with Randy? Well they also suffer from the Crass disorder, otherwise known as, "When good politics happen to bad bands." I really wanted to like these zany Swedish socialists who mention people like Noam Chomsky and Emma Goldman in their lyrics, but their music was so derivative that I could barely make it through a couple of tracks. According to their press release, in 1996 they released an album called "The Rest is Silence," with the goal of making the fastest punk record ever. I have no idea what that sounded like, but if "The Human Atom Bombs" goal was to make the most generic punk record ever made, they have succeeded. Randy wears their influences on their collective sleeves, rehashing old Clash, Rancid and rockabilly riffs like they wrote 'em themselves (and their younger fans just may believe that). While it's rare to find anything in punk rock or music in general that is truly original, I get the feeling that this band is using their music merely as a vehicle for their politics. Don't get me wrong, this is admirable; not enough bands today actually use their brains. However the generic music ends up detracting from the message, and no matter what genre they're imitating, the lyrics end up taking a back-

seat in this particular vehicle. Hopefully, Randy will listen to lots of Propagandhi in the next few months and realize that proficiency and politics can co-exist. But for now, "The Human Atom Bombs" is going to be stashed in the dusty region of my record collection: next to my Crass LPs. **JB**

**The Rapture** "Out of the Races and Onto the Tracks" (Sub Pop) CDep- Abrasive, rowdy, and downright obnoxious, these San Diego to NYC transplants have just enough spark to ignite even the most sullen fan. Don't hate the Rapture because they're beautiful. Their sound embodies the high-energy slacker rock that fellow West coast rockers Truman's Water pioneered in the mid 90s. This EP marks their second major release and reminds us why spazz rock is so alluring. Even though their songs are tight and concise, they still sound like they were thrown together last minute before recording. Whether you're a fan of the constipating strain in singer Luke Jenner's voice or the thunderous start/stop rhythms of drummer Matt Safer, The Rapture leave something for everyone to enjoy. **JBC**

**Recover** "Rodeo and Picasso" (Fueled By Ramen) CD- Artsy sounding album name, right? It reminds me of Bruce Dickinson's solo CD, "Balls to Picasso," only no one on this CD was ever in Iron Maiden, and what the rodeo and a twentieth-century painter have in common is still a mystery to me. But you don't care about Bruce Dickinson; you want to know what Recover sounds like, right? Their music spans just about every genre- from punk to metal to indie to emo to hardcore- in the course of these ten songs. But Recover's transitions between genres seem too forced: a hoarse scream is suddenly a whimper, or a metal breakdown instantly becomes gently strummed chords. It seems that the band are trying to do something different for the sake of doing something different, not because it's what's best for the song. In the end, they don't pull off any of the genres very convincingly, and end up sounding like a second rate Boy Sets Fire with a few token sensitive guy parts thrown in. There are some tracks that border on commerciality, and I'm sure fans of the Deftones would dig this- it could certainly give them some indie cred (who on MTV's Top Down Countdown has heard of Fueled By Ramen records?). But unfortunately for these aspiring nu-metal-heads, there's a better chance of seeing Picasso at the Rodeo than of me ever listening to this album again. **JB**

**The Red Scare** "Strangers Die Everyday" (Troubleman Unlimited) CD- I hate to say it but as I get on in my years, 'heavier' music seems to get harder and harder for me to listen to. Here's the evidence:

- 1) The days of driving four hours to see Morning Again and Earthmover in Detroit, now seem like a distant memory.



# Death by Stereo

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Jonah Brucker-Cohen: **JBC** | Adam Thorman: **AT** | Nick Tamburro: **NT** | Dan Frantic: **DF**

# 15

2) I was interested in seeing roughly one band (Shai Hulud, if you must know), at this year's Hellfest in Syracuse.

3) I have been finding myself listening to Belle and Sebastially, and liking it.

That's why it was so refreshing to get the new record from The Red Scare. While undeniably heavy and chaotic, the Red Scare maintains a sense of melody and experimentation that the Trustkill clones just can't pull off. This album reminds me of Converge's "Petitioning an Empty Sky," both musically and in its overall design. Moreover, these are the only two metal-hardcore bands I can think of who can pull off songs over six minutes long, and not bore the listener to death. Look kids, I know that the scene is looking pretty grim these days but think of it this way: Another Victim has finally broken up and bands like The Red Scare exist; proving that heavy music can still be vital, innovative, and emotional. I was extremely impressed with this record, and now that I think of it, seeing the Red Scare live might just be worthy of one of those road trips I was talking about earlier....  
**JB**

**Reno Kid "Sun, You've Got to Hurry" (Defiance) CD-** This is the third record this issue that I have had to review from the German label Defiance and I'm wondering if there was a mix-up at the printing plant. No joke, you play the three of them together, and it's exactly the same album! Seriously now, Defiance is really into emo and they want to share that love with the world. Unfortunately, most of the world has been sick of emo for some time now and has moved on to other things. This is not to say that Reno Kid won't get some airtime, as there must be kids out there living under a rock that will evaluate this CD as an original and challenging work. Everyone else will know that it just takes a little while longer for a sound to go across the ocean and then come back. If I hear any more bland emo tonight, I think I'm going to crack. **JM**

**Right Brigade (Revelation) CD-** My brother (the only hardcore aficionado I have on speed dial) told me this record was great. It's been a while since our musical opinions have crossed. Regardless of my brother's opinion, I wasn't that impressed with this record. There is nothing that makes it stick out from a seemingly over-saturated youth crew and tough guy hardcore genre. In a blind taste test, I could see people mistaking this for any number of bands (or some bland combination of many). I guess it's not enough to grunt about beating down traitors over tired riffs and straightforward beats with a breakdown sprinkled here and there. You might actually have to go out on a limb and try something new (the horror). But don't tell this band, as they have their hands full simply following the same old recipe. **JM**

**Rise Against "The Unraveling" (Fat Wreck) CD-** "Are you ready to rock?" Instead of merely being the sample that starts out this CD, "The Unraveling" answers the question with a resounding "Yes!" Imagine the melodies of Bad Religion, the musicianship of Strung Out, and vocals that can snap from a hardcore scream to a Graffiti-esque wail faster than the 200 bpm drum beat, and you have an idea of what Rise Against sound like. This band features former members of 88 Fingers Louie, (which is exhibited by their technical proficiency), but Rise Against doesn't need to resort to the ex-member crutch like so many other ailing punk bands nowadays. Sure, it's all the same ingredients: Octave chords, palm-muted guitar riffs, and galloping drum beats. But when the music presented in a new fashion, melodic punk can still be as vital as it was when Fat Wreck first came onto the scene. Fans of everyone from NOFX to Boy Sets Fire rejoice; Rise Against has arrived! **JB**

**Rival Schools/One Line Drawing "United By" (Some) CD-** I hate to say it since we have an interview with Rival Schools in this issue, but the songs they present here are really second rate. They sound thrown together, hastily recorded, and the end result is simply boring. Could it be that a successful rock band wants to help out a lost record label with the power of their name? Luckily, One Line Drawing are here to save the day. The songs they play are excellent. Just off-kilter enough to keep the listener's interest throughout and just pop enough to be catchy. They blow Rival Schools away with this one I'm sorry to say. Well, at least you know where your \$7 really goes when you buy this. **RS**

**Rocking Horse Winner "State of Feeling Concentration" (Ohev) CD-** Well here's a change of pace, and a welcome one. Florida's Rocking Horse Winner are a sometimes spacey, sometimes pop band, fronted by the gorgeous vocals of Jolie Lindholm. I've been reading reviews in a few zines that rave about this CD and say it's the best thing to happen to indie rock since the moog. I'm not sure if I agree, but I see where they're coming from. Driving rhythms under lush textured guitars topped off by Jolie's wispy vocals draw to mind comparisons to Juliana Hatfield or even the Smashing Pumpkins. This isn't necessarily a bad thing as Ms. Hatfield was a sorely underrated early '90s performer, and the Pumpkins could churn out a very good tune now and then as well. At the very least, it's good to see someone doing something different, and even though RHW is clearly playing indie pop along the lines of so many other female-fronted light-rock bands they do it with such grace and precision that all cheesiness is excised and one cannot help getting sucked in. I don't know if this beats out the Blake Babies but I could easily see myself picking this disc up for a lovesick friend--and that's more than I can say for most of the CDs we've gotten this issue. **RS**

**Roto "The Low Power Hour" (Resin) CD-** I was initially all set to give this CD a sound drubbing. I mean, I guess I was just in the mood to rock out during the first listen, and this CD wasn't cutting it. We're talking DC post-rock/post-hardcore/post-emo/post-whatever that Dischord seems to like to put out these days. It had the potential for some rock, but it always uncomfortably just drifted in the mid-range: not rock but not easy listening. The second listen, though, I caught myself singing along, which is always a good sign. I still feel that this CD needs to go one

way or the other, but it has some nice moments that are worth the effort of repeated listens. And while I can't see putting this on in the car when I want to drive fast, I would recommend it to the sweater vest/horned rim glasses crowd, as they might like it (I also hope they enjoy my sweeping generalizations). **JM**

**Rx Bandits "Progress" (Drive-Thru) CD-** The Rx Bandits, who I can only assume are not related to the similarly-named Creation Records twee-pop group BMX Bandits, are pretty much custom-suited for the teenaged, Warped Tour-going, skateboarding, Wheaties-listening demographic. That's a fairly large audience these days, so I'm sure the Rx Bandits' Sublime-meets-Blink 182 schtick will easily earn them a sizeable fan base. As for me, perhaps I'm too old for this type of music, or perhaps I don't have the Southern Californian upbringing requisite for being into this type of band, but to me the Rx Bandits' third-wave ska tunes feel rehearsed and their punkier stuff, while well-produced and inoffensive, is hardly inspiring. **DF**

**Rydell "Per Araua Ad Astra" (Cargo Music) CD-** Hardcore Hot Water Music fans may remember Rydell from their split seven inch a few years ago. But let's level with each other, no one who bought that seven-inch listened to the Rydell side, just like no one ever listens to do the bands HWM does splits with: Clairmel, Tomorrow, and my personal favorite, HWM's Japanese split with Screaming Fat Rat. Getting back to Rydell, there is a reason no one listened to their side of the record; why read "Better Homes and Gardens" when Bukowski is just a turntable flip away? Rydell plays uninspired indie rock, which their press release prefers to call "tasteful melodic post-hardcore." The guitars have an airy quality to them and seem to meander into infinity: the soundtrack for Atlas' struggle; in fact I felt like Atlas as this album dragged on and on and on and on. As if this wasn't bad enough, the vocals sound like Tommy from Silent Majority impersonating Frankie Stubbs from Leatherface- not gravely enough too sound good but way too dirty to sound pretty. And therein lies Rydell's problem, they haven't really developed their own sound. Instead, they've tried to re-create their favorite aspects of other bands, and it works against them in the end. This is where I would normally say something positive about the band, like how they have 'potential.' But it's too much of a chore to listen to this CD again just to pick out a memorable riff, so flip over your seven-inch and go to bed. I know I am. **JB**

**Samiam "Astray" (Hopeless) CD-** I'd never heard Samiam before, but I had heard a lot about them. I must say that I was pretty surprised when I popped the CD in and heard some pop emo come crooning out. This, I must say, was very disappointing. We need another generic pop emo band like we need Vanilla Ice and Milli Vanilli to do a reunion tour together. They play clean major label pop emo. I can definitely hear how they used to be pop punk before, but alas, they are punk no more. What I want to know is how a punk band decides to play shitty POP EMO! I've heard a lot of people talking about how good this record is, but it's pretty standard. Very clean, and pretty catchy songs, but so generic that I didn't even realize that I'd listened to the record and just had to restart it to try again. **AT**

**Saves The Day "Don't Change Who You Are" (Vagrant) CD-**

Saves the Day has always been my guilty pleasure. I'll admit, I was a bit apprehensive about this record, because the press release kept talking about how in the last year they had "grown as a band." While I like Saves The Day, I didn't think there was too much else they could do outside of their extremely cheesy- albeit catchy-brand of pop-punk...and I don't think I was completely wrong. What I mean, is that this album isn't really as much of a departure as the band and label would like you to think. But is that really a bad thing? Are we really ready for Saves the Days' version of the Clash's "Sandista"? Sure, the first few listens didn't impress me, but slowly, the songs began to really grow on me. Chris Conley's distinctive voice tells you that this is undoubtedly Saves The Day, while the music has much more of a pop sensibility, and has abandoned anything faster than a mid-tempo drum beat. The lyrics are also more subtle and ambiguous than the first two records, and Chris even sings falsetto in one song- but aside from that, this is a fairly straightforward rock album. Hey, there are those moments that still make me think that Chris needs some professional help like, "The last time that I saw you...I should have had my hammer and a few rusty spikes. To nail you on a wall and use bottles to catch your blood..." I'm no psychologist, but this kid sounds unstable at best. But there are also those moments where Chris vocalizes those feelings that most of us guys only think about the opposite sex. Jeffrey Dahmner comparisons aside, while this might not immediately hook fans of "Can't Slow Down," it shows that Saves the Day has enough diversity and originality to break out of the clear-cut boundaries they set on their first two full-lengths. In the least, they have finally outgrown the Lifetime comparisons that haunted them for so long. I'm interested to see where they go from here. **JB**

**The Sea and Cake "Oui" (Thrill Jockey) CD-** Y'know, sometimes it's difficult to say exactly why something sucks, but for your benefit, I'm going to try and explain. First off, it's jazzy in a Kenny G way, which gives it an adult-contemporary/easy listening feel, which my parents might like, but I personally can't fucking stand. Second, it's soft and wussy, without being pretty. I have been using this CD to put myself to sleep. I have met people that like the Sea and Cake, and they've all been yuppies. **AT**

**Seafood "Surviving The Quiet" (Big Wheel) CD-** It's not fair. Just because Seafood are British they get to have cool accents, while my feeble Austin Powers imitation can't even garner a laugh, let alone an ounce of coolness. Fortunately, Seafood have much more going for them than a regional infection. Their latest release, "Surviving the Quiet," skirts the line between the quirkiness of Belle and Sebastian and the punk fury of Jawbreaker; obscured by a whirlwind of feedback during its noisier moments. The album opens with "Easy Path," a pop number with a bouncy bassline and arpeggiated guitar melody. But just as you're comfortably settling into the upbeat groove and getting ready to make it a Blockbuster night, a female voice screams, "So, I can't hear you!" and BAM! the listener is transported back to



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still suitable for stage-diving. Following the same deceptive formula, the next track, "Belt" abruptly explodes into a cataclysmic guitar jam worthy of Built To Spill: crash symbols holding their own in a frenzied competition with over-driven amplifiers. But Seafood is unlikely to give Fred Durst any competition. "Dear Leap the Ride," the strongest of four lush ballads, is aided by pedal steel guitar and delicate vocal phrasing that would make Stuart Murdoch cringe. Occasionally there are electronic bleeps and blips reminiscent of fellow post-rockers Grandaddy, but Seafood are undoubtedly a pop band lurking somewhere behind a forest of rich instrumentation. The only places they falter are where they trade personality for predictability. "Beware Design's," reverberated female vocals over sparse acoustics are enough to send the listener to slumberland, without any dessert. Alternately, "Guntrip" sounds like a high school band learning a Slayer cover—the angst is too obvious. Seafood's inherent charm is their knack for subtlety and ability to alter the mood of their music through a series of unassuming shifts in dynamics. These devices—a rising or falling tension embedded in the song structure—are constantly overlapping, making "Surviving the Quiet," a continuously evolving journey. Could someone please pass the tartar sauce? **JB**

**The Search for Saturnalia "Four Letters" (Has Anyone Ever told You?)** CD—Although they hail from Austin, Texas, the Search for Saturnalia remind me of the spate of distortion-drenched indie rock bands emerging from Chapel Hill during the brief-lived height of its reign as the South's number one city for good bands. SFS use fuzzy guitars and slightly-off kilter melodies to good effect, and the boy/girl harmonies are nice, although singer David Denosowicz takes the lead with most of the vocals. This reminds me of a cross between Arcwelder, Pavement, and Small 23, and it isn't half bad. **DF**

**Shannon Wright "Dyed in the Wool" (Quarterstick)** CD—Shannon Wright is a folk singer, kind of, but she's a far cry from the quiet and introverted songwriting of many of her peers. On her third solo album since her move to North Carolina from New York City in 1998, Wright recruits as band members a veritable who's-who of Southern rock, including members of Rock\*A\*Teens, Shipping News, the Rachel's, and Japancakes. But despite the impressive roster of musicians, it is Wright's songwriting skills and her self-taught piano flourishes that give "Dyed in the Wool" its darkly gothic flavor. Certain songs, such as the album's opener, "Less Than a Moment," come across as being a bit ham-fisted and over-intense, almost like a Danny Elfman score to a Tim Burton movie, but other songs, like the chilling "Hinterland" and "Path of Least Persistence (Figure 11)" are melodic, spooky, and powerful. Wright's comes across as a slightly less angry and more mysterious P.J. Harvey, and her voice, while not technically perfect, has an air of unavoidable urgency about it, making her album easy to love and easy to hate, but attention-grabbing either way. **DF**

**Shipping News "Very Soon, and in Pleasant Company" (Quarterstick)** CD—This is the second album, and they are only getting better. Their music is sort of math rock, but can better be described as very Kentucky (i.e. June of 44, Rodan, etc). Guitarist and bassist Jeff Mueller and Jason Noble have been playing with each other for a very long time, and the music is clean and tight. There is something very dreamy about it, though. Lots of elongated, soft drumming on the cymbals to create atmosphere, as well as vibes and viola. Beautiful. They have that nice easy-going rocking back and forth rhythm. Listening to them would be best sitting on your front porch in the backwoods of Kentucky with a good friend at the end of a long day watching the sun slowly set beyond the distant hills, nursing a nice bottle of Southern Comfort. **AT**

**Sick Sense "Out of Sight out of Mind" (El Pocho Loco)** CD—Wow, the music that this label—run by the Voodoo Glow Skulls, ironically enough—puts out are the possibly the worst punk rock has to offer. You'd think a band on Epitaph, that has a considerably devoted fanbase, and has played on the main stage at the Warped Tour, would have better taste in music (or would you?). But, everything I've heard from this label is so godawful that I can't help but give their stuff reviews. Here we have a band called Sick Sense that made the mistake of including a photo of themselves on the back of the jewel case. I'm thinking the drummer reminds me of a younger, more bad-ass Edward James Olmos (without the facial pockmarks); the guitarist follows suit with denim shorts (that go below the knees, of course) and a basketball cap; while the bassist rocks a pair of gangsta overalls a la 1993 and a very large gold cross worn around his neck. Their lyrics, all very simple to the point of boneheadedness (along the lines of your typical highschool punk group), seem to have a subtle, yet intimidating Latino-pride slant to them. This isn't at all bad, as a matter of fact I'm glad to see a band from CA that represents the Latino community with a very authentic atmosphere. Complete with the prolific use of words like "puto," "loco," and "hos" (which isn't Spanish slang, but just plain out-of-place in a punk song), this band is truly bad. And their music, which ranges in style from Adolescents type assaults, to terrible ska tunes, to mid-80s style thrash seals the deal: if you buy this CD you are a moron. Oh, they included their phone number in the liner notes: (909) 780-0767. I would tell you to call, but Sick Sense is not worth the long-distance charge... unless you live in Riverside, CA that is. This is the worst CD I've ever heard. **RS**

**Sissies "Look Back And Laugh" (New Disorder)** CD—In this world of pretentious art-punk, and all too serious and annoying political bands, it's refreshing to hear a band like the Sissies. They fire through 14 songs of pop punk ranging from dancey and rocking to beautiful ballads as if they are having more fun than they've ever had in their lives. You can't help but smile hearing them earnestly cover Ace of Base's "Adventures In Paradise." This album is amazing. I'm glad that they moved over to New Disorder from Plan It X, as they will now have distribution and the masses can catch the fever that is the Sissies. The CD is in a neat soft fold over cover which means a \$5 price. Completely DIY. This is one of the best albums I've heard in a long time. This is the second album by the Sissies, and is the leap forward that takes the Sissies from being a good band to one of the better bands around. This three piece is lead singer/guitarist/songwriter Ali along with Hannah from Operation: Cliff Clavin. They play fun duel vocal pop punk that goes from

dancey and rocking to beautiful ballads. The "Star System" is an instant classic. I suppose that they could be described as a rawer more punk version of Cub. This is the perfect mix of indie pop and pop punk. **AT**

**Six Going on Seven "American't (or won't)" (Big Wheel/Doghouse)** CD—As soon as I popped this into my iMac, I noted that it sounded exactly like someone, and definitely not the subtle indie stylings of the band on the cover of this album. Samiam? Nah, not commercial enough. Matchbox 20? Closer, but that's still not it. Then it came to me, the realization hitting me like Whitney Houston on a bender, Everclear! Not the good Everclear circa "Sparkle and Fade," but the really awful, ultra-commercial pop music that they are doing now. I know that this is somewhat hard to believe, but the vocals on these songs (especially the phrasing on "Readying") are a dead ringer for Art Alexakis. It's almost scary. Music-wise, this isn't bad, but I'd rather hear it when Elvis Costello was doing it...twenty years ago. I don't what the 67ers are trying to accomplish with this album: mainstream credibility, a spot on MTV's television show "Becoming" where they can mimic Everclear legitimately, or maybe a spot as the musical guest on Saturday Night Live. Unfortunately, I think that instead of hearing the words "Live from New York, it's Saturday Night!" they're going to be hearing, "The budget bin is in the back of the store, there's plenty of copies of your record." **JB**

**Six Reasons to Kill "Kiss The Demon" (Alveran)** CD—Has anyone else noticed that the line between hardcore and metal has blurred to the point that it doesn't really exist anymore. In the mid/late 90's, bands like Earth Crisis and Integrity drew influences from both genres creating the whole metal-hardcore subcategory. Yet it seems that bands considered to be 'hardcore' nowadays—especially from overseas—seem to have much more in common with Slayer than Side by Side. Is there anything wrong with this? No, not inherently, I just thought it was an astute observation. Which brings us to Six Reasons to Kill. I was going to think of something clever to write here like 'six reasons not to buy this album,' or something else that only Ross and I would think is funny, but this really isn't that bad... aside from being painfully monotonous. While the members of Six reasons to Kill sport T-shirts ranging from Black Flag to Sepultura, I think that Sepultura definitely takes precedent here and I really didn't sense any semblance of punk influence or energy. In true German death metal style, this has lots of double bass, detuned guitars, growled vocals, etc. The few bands they choose to thank include Converge and Damnation, so if you like either of those bands newer material these guys might be worth checking out. I'd rather listen to Iron Maiden. **JB**

**Sky Came Falling "10.21" (Ferret)** CD—You know, I really can't get into anything on Ferret. Their CDs are always amazingly packaged, the recordings are always good, and they seem to have cornered the market on metallic hardcore in the Disembodied vein. But, most of it either sounds the same or just catches me in a mood when I want to listen to an old Drop 19s record I have rather than my Slayer CD. Then we have Sky Came Falling. This Long Island band need some work, definitely. They need to decide what type of band they want to be: a metal band, or a tight as fuck hardcore outfit in which the screamed vocals don't work so well over the melodic power-chords. With that said,

Sky Came Falling have boat loads of potential. This CD shows them matching on-the-money melodicism with jazz feels, head-bobbing onslaughts of power, and a rhythm section hard to match anywhere in aggro-rock and roll. Although I'm not blown away by this release I expect this band is headed for big things—like in the Shai Hulud department—and I will certainly snatch the next CD that graces our mailbox for myself. Not incredible, but quite promising. **RS**

**Sloe "Inexact Replica" (Sessions)** CD—Before anything happens, I just wanted to compliment Sloe on the packaging for this CD. It's a nice cardboard sleeve-looking thing that folds out to show a beautiful inside design and has all the pertinent information on the flaps. If you're going to do something, you might as well do it right, and this band has. Now in terms of music, I wish I were more enthused than I was about the packaging, but my heart just isn't there. It's not that this is bad emo/indie rock; it's just that I have been doing reviews for a while this evening and this just isn't leaping out enough. Granted, some of the more rock moments are nice, and the keyboard adds a nice counterpoint to said rock moments, but it's been done before, right? I only hope that my ears are not packed too full of crud that I am missing a diamond in the rough here. **JM**

**Small Brown Bike "Dead Reckoning" (No Idea)** CD—In the recesses of my brain, Small Brown Bike were always lumped into that "second rate Hot Water Music" category, alongside contemporaries like Rydell and the Casket Lottery. For this reason, I popped in "Dead Reckoning" expecting to write a lukewarm review...then something unexpected happened. The first octave chord kicked in like a punch to the abdomen, followed by vicious snare drum triplets: one-two-three! one-two-three! with the passionate screams of Mike Reed resonating above it all. And it just gets better from there, folks. This band plays heavy music, but it's so well constructed and melodic, that it doesn't sound heavy in the traditional sense of the word. The guitarists play off each other: one strumming a chord while the other plays an intricate line, breaking into a palm-muted open E stomp in unison, then back to into completely different textures again. Yet somehow throughout their maelstroms of madness, they retain a remarkable level of cohesiveness. Could it be heavy music for the thinking man? There is a nautical theme to the beautiful layout (which has more folds than Rousseau), that parallels the lyrics: an odyssey through loss, loneliness, and death. That last statement should be reason enough for you to buy this record; when's the last time you heard a hardcore album compared to The Odyssey? **JB**

**Snuff "Blue Gravy: Phase 9" (Fat)** CD—Yes, more from this long-running British act that, along with Leatherface best exemplifies the British



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Jonah Brucker-Cohen: **JBC** | Adam Thorman: **AT** | Nick Tamburro: **NT** | Dan Frantic: **DF**

17

take on powerful, grown-up post pop-punk. Heavy and melodic with worthwhile lyrics and a great attitude, Snuff keeps going because they're too good to stop. Here's 9 tracks that pack a bit more substance than their last, including the insane title track which fuses loud, drum-heavy punk slop with Hammond organ and horns 60's soul. It sounds like Booker T & The MGs jamming on the Warped Tour and that said, it's pretty damn good. Harmonicas show up in the furious, dense songs and NEVER sound out of place. There's so much packed into the Snuff style that still manages to sound great when they turn everything up and start breaking things. You wonder if anyone else in the world could pull this all off and amazingly, the answer is no. Features 2 live tracks and 2 "new versions". **dup**

**Sommerset "Fast Cars, Slow Guitars" (Phyte) CD-** I think there are upwards of seventeen bands called Sommerset, and I have to admit that this is one of them. This particular Sommerset is from New Zealand, which is a great country because their education and health care used to be socialized, so today there is very little class disparity as compared to our United States. Unfortunately, the two things that New Zealand was not able to escape were the wrath of globalization and shitty pop punk bands. I saw a shitty pop punk band when I lived in New Zealand called Kitsch. Boy did they suck. The lead singer kept whining about getting spit on and getting hit in the mouth with the microphone. Totally punk rock! We tried to hurt him very badly, but he was able to drive us away by continuing to play regurgitated power chords at us. The fiend! Anyway, Kitsch and Sommerset are essentially the same band. What would make Sommerset better is if their lead singer didn't whine about getting hit and spit on, but there's no way to really tell that from listening to the CD. **AP**

**Sparechange00 "Fifty Thousand Moments" (Grilled Cheese/Cargo) CDep-** I sincerely hope that Sparechange00 had their somewhat awkward moniker forced upon them, a la Dinosaur Jr. or the London Suede, because I can't imagine why they would otherwise want their *nom de plume* to be "Sparechange Double Zero." Unfortunately names notwithstanding, this is a solid and all-too-short EP that comes across as powerful and heartfelt while cleverly sidestepping all the usual emo conventions. This easily outclasses similar-sounding releases by bands like Saves the Day or Fairweather, and a lot of the credit is due to singer Ryan Watts, who howls with real emotion and urgency. **DF**

**Spark Lights the Friction "l'homme robotik" (Trustkill) CD-** It's good that Converge has changed their

layout style since "Forever Comes Crashing" or else people might get confused. Remember the old "photocopies from anatomy books laid over photocopies of circuit boards with some bonus gold ink" look? Well it's back. Spark Lights the Friction plays boring half hardcore, half "Hot Water Music sure is cool" rock with wretched vocals. It sounds like the band enjoys what they are doing, so chances are they would put on a good live show, especially if you couldn't hear the vocals. Unfortunately there's not enough energy on l'homme robotik to make up for the mediocre songwriting and the fact that "people are robots" is not a very cunning or original idea. **AP**

**Spitvalves "Fine Print At The Bottom" (Resurrection AD) CD-** Hmhmhmhm. They're called the Spitvalves (a crucial irrigation module of a trombone) and they have checkers on their artwork. Already my stomach is turning. And on Resurrection AD? Apparently this Orlando crew mixes horn-laden 25th generation ska-punk with rappy vocals and lots of "quirky" tempo changes. Oh wait, they're singing, now they're yelling, oh now the horns come in. Ah. I hate to sound like a dick, but wouldn't this have been much more applicable 5 years ago? I guess there are still pretenses out there who want an underground mix of Barenaked Ladies and the Voodoo Glowskulls. Exhaustingly useless. **dup**

**Spoon "Girls Can Tell" (Merge) CD-** I could tell you about 15 people I know who are out and out Spoon fans yet I think this is the first time I've sat down to listen to them. It's really easy to see why people feel that way- Spoon has this subdued rock feel down to a near science on this, their third record (and their third label). A mellow, almost soothing feel with a fierce power-pop sensibility swilling down in their collective stomach. I detect a touch of Squeeze amidst the dark and delicious mellotron & vibes on the opening "Everything Hits At Once". Tense rock stays in the spotlight as more drums come into the picture, then piano and this overall sweeping melancholia that goes down real nice. The guitars come in choppy and smooth varieties and fill in the songs right where you start thinking the track needs it. Could this be the de-construction of moody power pop? It never gets too busy with the instrumentation, and this band seems entirely in control of not just what they're playing but the nuances created by sounds dropped in the right place. Today's lesson- a bit of subtlety goes a long way. Very good stuff, this is. **dup**

**Standstill "The Ionic Spell" (Bcore) CD-** What's that guy's name; you know, the one that runs around the barnyard, yelling about the sky falling and what not? Is it Chicken Little? Anyway, this is what Standstill sounds like, the band that is the house act for the sky falling. The singer moves between screaming out for people to listen and desperate whispers (just in case). The music also seems to have that ready to teeter over the edge sound, so when it's playing quiet, it's still tense. And when it's full on, well, it always feels like it's just about to go that one step further, to actually let the sky engulf us all. At the end of the CD, you don't know what hit you, and repeated listens only deepen the intrigue and intensity. Did I mention I like this CD? **JM**

**Stars of Aviation "Greatest Disappointment" (Grandpa) CDep-** The EP is always an interesting musical phenomenon. Not short enough to be a "blink and you miss it" single, yet not long and grand enough to be a full-length record. The

EP sits smack in the middle, wanting to be both yet remaining only an EP. The best EP is the one that grabs yr attention and makes you want everything else by a band, particularly long releases. In that way, the EP has the upper hand on a single, because many bands can take 2 songs from their collection and make a tight single. Stars of Aviation have this down pat, delivering a fully realized 4 song EP that begs for a longer release yet adequately fills these 18 or so minutes. The album starts off quiet yet dense with elements burbling away in the background that hint at the full power that is the last song. The build from song to song is nice, with the loud and bouncy last song being a nice release. This is a near perfect EP that beckons the listener to find out what else the band has to offer. **JM**

**State Route 522 "Retrospective" (Status) CD-** It's always sad to get a CD and think that it's great, then realize that it is a compilation of stuff by a defunct band. Instead of seeing if the band is playing near you soon, you hope that the post-breakup bands are as good as the initial CD. Luckily, 3/4 of the people from State Route 522 formed Sharks Keep Moving, a band that I cannot say enough good things about. The foundation for SKM can be found on this CD: the post rock attention to repetition and slow progression of a melodic or rhythmic idea, the emo style of soft then loud, and the attention to dissonance in order to keep things interesting. State Route 522, though, tends to be heavier and more punk-influenced than their progeny, spitting out some shorter songs that rock harder than SKM do. So even though the initial band is long gone, we still have this great collection to remember them by and SKM to see where they took these initial ideas. **JM**

**The Stereo "No Traffic" (Fueled by Ramen) CD-** Yes, this record is extremely slick, over-produced, and frighteningly corporate sounding (not qualities usually associated with a small indie label like Fueled By Ramen). Yes, it's cheesy to the point of nausea, ex: "This is no ordinary kiss that you planted on the lips." And yes, even though there aren't any pictures of the band included in the uber-glossy layout, I still think their singer looks like Carson Daly (and it wouldn't surprise me if the Stereo were in charge of his fan club). But there is no denying that what the Stereo do, they do well. The harmonies are in key, the songs are well-written, the palm-muted guitars propel the songs forcefully, and they have an uncanny ability to switch from straight ahead rock tunes to 80's pop ballads- both of which wouldn't sound out of place on Los Angeles's KROQ. But like their indie-wanna-be-major-label counterparts Gameface and Error Type: 11, I just can't stomach this. It's just too processed, too Third Eye Blind, and too much for me to handle. The talent is here, but unfortunately it's overshadowed by The Stereos' manufactured emotion and complete lack of sincerity. **JB**

**Sunn 01) "00 Void" (Hydra Head) CD-** The first riff on this album is a slow scary minor-key bend thing that sounds like a distorted cello tuned to drop-C. I listened for a bit. I checked my email, cooked up some pasta, came back 13 minutes and 50 seconds later and the cello guy is still bending that same note. Some torture chamber style synth came in to accompany him, but basically nothing happened. All the songs were like that. Conceptual art music for Hydra Head

fans? Phillip Glass minimalism meets sludge/doom metal? I don't know. The whole album sounds like the intro to a Bolt Thrower song (the War-master album), like any second the drummer's going to come in with the insane double bass. But he never does. I think he fell asleep. **NT**

**Super XX Man -& Eric Metronome "Home Volume II" (Post-Parlo) CD-** Scott Garred of Super XX Man knows how to put together a well-crafted song. His soft spoken vocals add just enough authenticity to make solitary ballads of loneliness believable. We usually hear about guys like Garred after they've blown up to Elliot Smith size, but by that time the secretary down the hall thinks they're cool because they write songs called "Me and Katie" and "See You See". Garred is different than the next big soon-to-be-singer-songwriter because he actually reads emotion into these songs without forcing anything. Accompanying Garred is Eric Metronome who interjects quiet guitar arrangements into the mix. This duo reminds me of the early days of stripped-down Sebadoh stylings where playing well was less important than the music itself. **JBC**

**Ted Leo / Pharmacists "The Tyranny of Distance" (Lookout!) CD-** When I first popped this into the stereo I was disappointed. It seemed a bit too polished and a bit too retro for the Ted Leo I had grown to love in his Chisel days. Sure the mod rock and roll styling were still there, but it just didn't seem as raw or as energetic as Chisel. But, out of laziness, and the fact that I couldn't quite find the words to write a review yet, the CD remained in my stereo where it has been for the past month and a half. It got to the point where when my disc-changer would come to this CD I would hit the button for next disc. But, eventually laziness set in again and I stopped hitting the skip button and began to just work while the disc played in the background. Maybe the theory a professor of mine in college had that people like what they hear the most is true, or maybe these songs penetrated some deep dark cavern of my fragile psyche which can only be pierced by too much negligent listening, but now I have come to the conclusion that this CD is fucking out of this worldly amazing. It is so incredible that when Mr. Leo came to NYC with Quasi I sat outside a club for two hours with a friend trying to get in (to no avail). Ted Leo's oft-mentioned guitar genius is there in full, often over-shadowed by his gorgeous voice; the lyrics are witty and poetic as ay I've ever heard; and the sheer number of textures, feelings, and timbres this guy creates is ungodly. Ted Leo is truly the best thing to happen to indie rock in the last 5 years. Anyone who loved Chisel like I did will love this CD. And, anyone who isn't quite hip enough for Moods for Moderns and likes their music a bit more brooding than anything else in Lookout's back catalog should definitely check this out. Oh yeah, and this is like night and day compared to his last record on Gern Blandsten. **RS**

**This Busy Monster "Fireworks" (Barsuk) CD-** There are two different reasons to genre-hop within the course of an album: (1) because the band needs a gimmick due to their inability to play, or (2) because they can pull it off and want to spice up an album



# 81

instead of doing the same song over and over again. Most of the bands reviewed in these pages fall into the first category; This Busy Monster happens to

fall into the second. Now, we're not talking a jump from ragtime to Christian death metal to zydeco, but the band does mix it up. They also tackle many different instruments not commonly found on an indie rock record (the singing saw and clarinet come to mind). For some reason, I want to compare this group to Ben Folds Five, but with more sincerity and the tendency to full-out rock at some points. This could have easily been a big mess, but somehow everything congealed just right and a larger artistic statement was made. I am thoroughly impressed. **JM**

**Thrice "Identity Crisis" (Hopeless) CD-** Hmm... it appears that the folks at Hopeless are the ones having the identity crisis, abandoning their proven formula of pop-punk, for the driving hardcore of So-Cal rockers, Thrice. Luckily for Hopeless, they picked the right band to make their stage-dive onto the hardcore bandwagon. Then again, Thrice isn't your typical hardcore band. Sure, they have vital elements of the genre: Breakdowns, sing-alongs, mosh parts, etc. However, their keen sense of melody and command of dynamics, remind me more of No Use For a Name than Sick of It All. The diversity on this album is also remarkable, ranging from brutal metal riffs to acoustic guitar intros, sometimes all in one song...yet somehow it all works. Their singer/guitarists, Dustin Kensrue, is largely responsible for this cohesiveness, specifically his ability to change his vocals to fit the music, without making it sound awkward or forced. "Identity Crisis," is an excellent record, and should please fans of Fat Wreck style punk and Victory style hardcore alike. Apparently Thrice's upcoming full-length was recorded by Brian "I'm a robot" McTeman (see Impossibles review), and I'm predicting big things for this band. The cover of Rolling Stone, perhaps, or maybe even an interview in Law of Inertia. Now, that's making it. **JB**

**Throwdown "You Don't Have To Be Blood To Be Family" (Indecision) CD-** All right! I must offer kudos to these young men for creating the most flawless parody of straight edge rhetoric since Jud Jud. The crowd shots are pristine, with the band barely holding on to their instruments while pointing back at the audience. Throwdown's got the lyrics down pat as well- absurdly simpleminded sentence fragments that make unity seem as involved as drooling. Song titles include gems like: "The Edge Is Strong," "Unite," and "Family." And that name! Could you think of a more hilarious and obvious "hardcore" name than "Throwdown"? The hits just keep on coming- the jumping bassist photo, the subtle homosexual tension of not one, but two band members pictured topless in the line up photos- one of em's even holding a folding knife! And, if it can't get any better, next to each songs lyrics are some "personal reflections" from some band member who speaks in grandiose terms like, "1997. Everything changed for me that year." And I thought Good Clean Fun had a sense of humor. This is so well done, it's almost like they're serious. They couldn't be, could they? **dup**

**Thug Murder "The 13th Round" (TKO) CD-** I hate to admit it, but when I saw the cover of this

CD, brought to us from 3 Japanese girls by way of this San Francisco record label, I was expecting some shitty street punk along the lines of the Real Kids or the Business. Instead, we have 15 blazing songs sung in the most possible broken English that combines balsy anthems and scorching solos. I think a good comparison would be the Dropkick Murphys mixed with some Swingin' Utters and even some Sex Pistols. Overall, I'd say this is a great CD. This stuff has been done before, but usually by American guy bands patronized by American guys who are only interested in listening to American guys rock the house. So, this CD is testament to the fact that not only can 3 Japanese girls who have well-above-average control of their instruments and song-writing skills can and do rock, but also that there this style of music can be played just as well if not better by them as well. **RS**

**Thumb "3" (Victory) CD-** This should never have happened. This album is to Victory Records as symptoms of terminal illness are to a dying animal. Of course we all remember when the animal was just a baby. It was everyone's favorite play thing. Boys and girls of all ages gave it so much attention, petting it, feeding it, scratching behind its ears and under its belly. Sadly, we also remember when the puppy grew up, lost its novelty, it's cute and cuddliness. Most of the boys and girls went away, but a few stayed, perhaps out of obligation, perhaps because they truly believed they could still love such a homely and pathetic creature. Today, the once magical pet has degenerated into a decrepit and decaying mass of fragile bones and fetid fur. And when the children do pass by, they must cover their eyes to avoid catching glimpse of the rotting mass of barely-living flesh. They must plug their noses between thumb and forefinger to block out the rancid stench that hovers about. And they must cover both ears to free themselves from the sounds of the final and terrifying breaths of their long-lost companion; breaths which, when wheezed out at levels just audible, resemble the insipid tones of rap-core. **AP**

**Thursday "Full Collapse" (Victory) CD-** I was under the impression no one noticed this amazing New Jersey band as I loudly proclaimed the greatness of their first record on Eyeball Records in our 7th issue. Apparently someone did as this outfit went from having a few fans here and there to garnering random kids in the Midwest who e-mail me and tell how much they love Thursday. Well, I love them too. While their first record was a very precise and focused looking into melodic hardcore blending slightly off-key singing with screaming and soaring guitars, this record is far less tight and rigid. Instead, the guitars take on more of an At the Drive-In feel with very free melodies that seem to wander all over the place, and the vocals are even more off-key and wrenching. Although I feel the acute differences between both records will be lost on most listeners I'd say the result is top-notch. Especially the 4th song "Autobiography of a Nation" which is really the only song here that even comes close to matching the sullen beauty of "This Side of Brightness" off their first record. What really sets Thursday apart is their ability to meld dark, somber minor-chord melodies with a touch of the best kind of grooves found in the best kind of hardcore. They are sincere without the sap and powerful without beating you over the head. This is the kind of music I had been waiting for when everyone else was wrapped up in Mineral and Jejune. **RS**

**Tiger Army "II: The Power of Moonlite" (Hellcat) CD-** I never thought I would see the words "slide guitar by Lars Fredrickson" in an album's

liner notes, but since the latest effort from Tiger Army is a conglomeration of punk rock celebrities, I guess it makes sense. With Geoff Kresge (ex-AFI) on stand-up bass and none other than London May from Samhain on drums, Tiger Army definitely has the chops to keep pace with youngsters like a New Found Glory. This is a very diverse CD: Elements of rockabilly, punk rock and 50's style rock combine to create a genre Tiger Army pens as "Psychobilly." Their singer guitarist Nick 13's fluent guitar playing is worthy of his legendary rhythm section, and his surf-style tremolo adds a much welcomed blast of Dick Dale influence to the punk rock debauchery. The only weakness that Tiger Army suffers is when their blatant AFI influence masks their own sound. It doesn't help their case that Davey Havok sings on a bunch of tunes (some which sound note-for-note like early AFI material). If Tiger Army can break free of their AFI tendencies, I think this whole psychobilly thing might have some potential. Hopefully, they won't make the same mistake on their next record by having Brain Setzer as a special guest, because with enough practice Tiger Army could be an updated version of the Stray Cats. Look out! **JB**

**Tim Kinsellas "He Sang His Didn't He Danced His Did" (Troubleman Unlimited) CD-** I don't care what bands Tim Kinsellas used to be in, this album is awful. Accompanied only by an acoustic guitar, Mr. Kinsellas attempts to pull off a Pedro the Lion-type introspective journey. Unfortunately, his artsy tendencies once again take over, making what could have been a good record, laughably mediocre. I guess he expects that the mindless drones of kids who worship Joan Of Arc, (who in turn probably worshipped Cap'n Jazz), will praise whatever he releases. This may or may not be true, but it doesn't change the fact that this is pretentious drivel. While the minimalist bleeps and blips of Joan of Arc are hard enough for me to stand, the last thing anyone needs to hear is Tim Kinsellas' singing lines like, "and why can't this we stop all this blowjobishness," in an out-of-key whine for 26 minutes. In case anyone cares, Joan of Arc previously recorded the last three songs, and I really hope the JOA versions are better, because I couldn't even sit through one of them. It's really a shame that labels seem to care more about what bands people used to be in than the actual content of their music. Do I see a Tim Kinsellas/Kevin Seconds tour in the future? **JB**

**Tom Daily "The Burlington Northern" (Thick) CD-** These are somewhat enticing indie-rock songs influenced by an obvious myriad of rockers before. Nothing much you haven't heard, except for maybe a song entitled 'Reese Witherspoon', who is one of the less attractive of the teen drama stars to reach the big screen. The Burlington Northern features lots of electric guitars playing catchy chords and riffs. I once knew an engineer who hated Reese Witherspoon, it seemed almost passionately. Sometimes Tom Daily stops playing the electric guitar and just plays acoustic guitar without drums. This is not unheard of in independent rock and roll. I heard that Reese Witherspoon was good in some movie that was adapted from Little Red Riding Hood. That doesn't make this album any better. **AP**

**Trans Megetti "Fading Left to Completely On" (Gern Blandsten) CD-** Could I ever lie to you? I mean, about CDs? No. So I will tell you straight, I really wanted to dislike this, if only because I had heard iffy things about the

band and I don't really like their name (I know, I know, I'm shallow, you watch "Friends" too, I bet). Anyway, this CD got on my good side and I actually came away from it thoroughly enjoying it. From the punky aggressive yet indie jangle of the first song to the final acoustic number, the bases were covered in my book. The lyrics were not lame. The pace was fast yet not unrelenting (unless it needed to be). The lead singer's voice has a certain amount of charm, yet doesn't sound like everyone else. And yeah, I think it took the best aspects of indie rock and punk and mixed it together all smooth and tasty. Moral of the story: I'm shallow, I admitted in a public forum I watch "Friends" (the horror), and this CD rocks. **JM**

**Tree "No Regrets No Remorse" (Wonderdrug) CD-** Even though I'm Boston-based, like this label and this band, it still escapes me how people still like this stuff. Grunge-tinged new 'metal' (which means people who like the Deftones would call this hardcore) that has kept alive the stompy sound that we all hated in 1993. Except now they drag out the vocals in that ready-for-active-rock-radio Creed/Alice In Chains style. Sorry fellas, I'm lost but if Tree has a fanbase outside the Northeast god bless 'em. **dup**

**Tricky "Mission Accomplished" (Epitaph) CD-** Wait, did I miss something? Since when did Epitaph (a label I associate with Bad Religion and Rancid) put out records by Tricky? Well, I guess I shouldn't be surprised anymore, after being totally confused by Epitaph releasing that Tom Waits album. I've never been a big fan of Tricky's brand of drum 'n' bass and hip-hop thing. I can't put my finger on the problem, I just looked for my fix elsewhere. This EP, on the other hand, seemed to do the trick, though. How can I ditch on any record with a quasi-cover of Peter Gabriel's "Big Time" on it? And the other tracks have some nice rhythms and textures to keep things interesting as well. I still think that people like Squarepusher and the Ninja Tune crew are pushing this thing further than Tricky, but this is nice. Just tell me there are not going to be any NOFX remixes. **JM**

**Tune in Tokyo "Make Me Eternal" (Buddy System) CD-** Tune in Tokyo occupy a somewhat odd position between Shudder to Think (for their artsy weirdness), Cave-In (for their unusual guitar sounds), and recent Fugazi (because... well... because I say so). That said, Tune in Tokyo definitely have a sound of their own. They veer towards the more experimental side of hardcore, and while they're not heavy as lead, they still pack a punch when they decide to rock out. I'm not completely and totally blown away by this but it's certainly nice to see a hardcore band trying new things with the genre. The good-ol-boy Xs-on-their-hands crowd probably won't dig this but people who like their music a bit more adventurous and weird would be doing



# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: **RS** | Jonah Bayer: **JB** | Jason Murphy: **JM** | du proserpio: **dup** | Adam Parks: **AP** |  
Jonah Brucker-Cohen: **JBC** | Adam Thorman: **AT** | Nick Tamburro: **NT** | Dan Frantic: **DF**

# 19

themselves a favor to check it out. Plus, hey, the Buddy System is a great label – anything related to *Burn Collector* gets good marks in my book. **DF**

**Trust No One “You’ve Been Warned” (Eulogy) CD-** Do people really still listen to this stuff? I thought the days of tuff-guy-wait, Trust No One has a girl in the band- um, the days of “tuff-person” hardcore died when Earth Crisis started copping Fear Factory riffs a few years ago. But no, John Wylie from Where Fear and Weapons Meet and Morning Again is back at it. I can’t say there is really anything exceptional about this record aside from the fact that I haven’t really heard many bands playing this particular genre recently. “You’ve Been Warned,” is slam-packed with chugga-chugga E chord variations, windmill-inspiring breakdowns, and “gang style” backing vocals – you know the drill. They’re definitely a cut above most of the musicians playing this style of hardcore, and I like the fact that the lyrics to their songs are expansive (most songs fill two columns of the layout). However, I don’t know how seriously I can take a band with lyrics like

“Teaching our kids that violence is the way,” when they are inspiring kids to beat the shit out of each other in the pit with their music. You may disagree, but I’ve seen enough of my friends get their noses or other limbs broken at these types of shows to take lyrics like that with anything but a grain of salt. It’s nice to see that Trust No One aren’t jumping on the bandwagon of what’s popular this week, but I think I’m staying out of the pit for now. **JB**

**Untias “Porch Life” (No Idea) CD-** I decided against reviewing this CD, seeing as you could learn more about Untias’ music from the interview in this issue than any review. So instead of hearing about how “alt-country Untias sorta sounds” or the obligatory references to Jeff Tweedy, I want you to go back and read the interview, and if you already read it I want you to re-read it because you probably missed something. One interesting side note is that the CD has a giant horseshoe on it, and Untias’ logo also has a horseshoe

in it. That reminds me of this guy who lived behind my old house and used to play horseshoes literally 24 hours a day. Every time I was in the kitchen I would hear that familiar “clink,” turn my head, and see him at it again; he even had some kind of tool to pick up the horseshoes without bending over. Towards the end of the year my roommate brought up some illegal lawn darts and we were going to challenge him to some sort of tournament but it never happened; he probably would have won anyway. **JB**

**The Unknown “Pop Art” (Boss Tuneage) CD-** No, not Those Unknown or Pop Unknown. The Unknown

are clearly aware how few waves you can make by feeding more change into the guitar pop machine. But like most genre acts, it’s a labor of love to churn out punchy power-pop with those clear immaculate vocals. It’d be all too easy to mistake this for pop-punk, but there’s no punk in this mix aside from some speedy leads and aggressive drumming. The sugar pours out of the speakers (a good thing) and there’s no way this bunch of mooks who cover The Cars’ “You Might Think” can fall into the punk bin unless by de facto musical segregation. Nonetheless, they write a sound about kids “not knowing what punk is”. But I’m not mad at this Cleveland outfit for that. If you dig a bit of power-pop with the balance in favor of the power, then you’re ok with me. I’m not going to say this band doesn’t do anything new (that’s not the point) but I can not along to this and then forget it the next day. Solid pop, but nothing that great. **dup**

**Up In Arms “Fight to the Death” (Uprising) CD-** Maybe at one point in my life, this would have had me on the edge of my seat, crossing my fingers that this band would stop in a town close by so I could see them and rock out. Now, call it what you want (maturity, wussing out, expansion of tastes, hearing loss/damage), but I’m just not as impressed anymore. For one thing, this album stays on the same tempo the whole time, which is great for the pit and what not, but not quite as interesting for those listening at home. That, and every song seems to have the same patterns: gruff, forced vocals, never that exciting or dynamic guitars, and the occasional breakdown to throw off the monotony. If you need a reference, the band that most comes to mind is Another Victim. This is by the book tough guy/ambiguously political hardcore done well; it’s just that this is SO played out and I need something different. **JM**

**V/A “Cheap Shots & Low Blows: TKO Singles & EPs Collection Vol. 1 (TKO) CD-** There used to be a place in Cleveland called Riot 101. When I was in high school, our newest record reviewer, Dan, and myself would travel across town to see street punk shows in its beer-drenched basement. The bands were never very good, and the whole scene was always a bit frightening, but there was a certain charm to seeing a bunch of grown men, arms linked, singing about unity and pride. As the title suggests, this album is a collection of all of the seven-inches and EPs that TKO records released from 1997-1998. It features: The Templars, Dropkick Murphys, Anti-Heros, Workin’ Stiffs, and more bands with tough sounding names, most of which I’ve never heard of. It’s surprising how listenable this CD is to a kid whose only really street punk record is The Explosion, and while all the bands are all fairly straight forward, they each have their own distinct character. The song structures are obviously recycled, but bands like One Man Army prove how much can be done with three-chords, a simple story, and, most importantly, a sneer. These songs weren’t inspiring enough to motivate me to get a summer job, but they’ve reopened a genre of music to me that ended when Riot 101 permanently shut its doors four years ago. **JB**

**V/A “Alpha Motherfuckers: A Tribute to Turbonegro” (Hopeless) CD-** Hopefully my rock-critic credentials won’t be too damaged if I admit that I was never too familiar with Turbonegro, Norway’s legendary “Denim Demons,” who – judging from the lineup on this lengthy tribute CD – seem to wield nearly as much influence

as other rock gods like AC/DC. The hordes of bands queuing up to pay their respects include a veritable who’s-who of new-school cock-rock (Nashville Pussy, Supersuckers, Zeke, Scared of Chaka, Queens of the Stone Age) as well as a significant number of Scandinavian bands – including the black metal duo Satyricon! The common thread that ties all these bands together is, of course, the music of Turbonegro, which is, quite simply, relentlessly and unapologetically rocking. A couple of the bands here drop the ball, but for the most part Turbonegro’s songs are so good, and the bands covering them so reverential, that this comes off as a way above-average tribute album – and, interestingly enough, a good introduction to the band itself. **DF**

**V/A “NYC Takeover Volume 1 and 2” (Victory) CD-** It’s on Victory Records. That’s really all I should have to say these days, but as you probably want more, I will deliver. These are live tracks recorded in October of 2000 at some Victory fest in NYC, and they pulled out all the stops. I must say, though, that this record has great production for a live recording (particularly hardcore bands): who ever was doing the mix wanted to make you feel like you were right down front, and he or she earned their paycheck this time around. As for the bands, we’re talking All Out War, Reach the Sky, Grey Area, Skarhead, Buried Alive, and River City Rebels. I personally was only interested in Reach the Sky and Buried Alive, but fans of the other bands will be more than satisfied. I must say, though, that I feel ill whenever this reviewing job makes me listen to Skarhead, as they flat out suck and annoy me. So what we have here is more of the same from Victory; if it’s your thing, this is a CD worth finding. If Victory’s not your thing, you have already dropped this magazine in disgust and gone to listen to Bach or something. **JM**

**V/A “Punk-O-Rama 6” (Epitaph) CD-** Fads come and go, but for better or worse, every year there’s a new Punk-O-Rama compilation—showcasing the best that Epitaph has to offer. The classics are here: NOFX, Pennywise, Rancid, and Bad Religion (bonus points for including the BR classic, “I Want to Conquer the World,” on this disc). The newcomers are also here: Osker, Raised Fist, Downset, and Beatsteaks (no bonus points for any of them, sorry.) Now I know what you’re thinking, “Great Jonah, but I’ve heard this all before. Maybe if I was 13, I would think this comp was cool, but I’m over it.” Good point, but I forgot to mention the third category: The bands that will carry Epitaph into the new millennium: Hot Water Music and The (International) Noise Conspiracy. If you’re not familiar with either of these bands (which is highly unlikely seeing that we have an interview with (I)NC in this very issue), do yourself a favor and buy their releases on Epitaph, then everything else in their respective catalogs. While I’m not a huge fan of (I)NC’s music, their politics alone make these purchases worthwhile. Sure, I could live without ever hearing another Voodoo Glow Skulls song in my life (does this band exist just to torment me?), but I must admit that this comp displays the strongest roster in recent memory from the biggest punk label in the world. **JB**

**V/A “DIY Fest Compilation Volume 1” (Digital Hardcore) CD-** I met the DIY fest kids at Warped Tour this year, where they had a table

selling various merch for themselves as well as LOI’s favorite publishers, Soft Skull Press. As far as I know, they were the only truly independent booth on the tour, and were a polar opposite to the corporate driven circus that the Warped Tour has become –making them even more vital. This compilation is an eclectic mix of some of the best independent musicians, authors, and spoken word artists around, and has something for everyone. For the kids who like to read books, how about spoken word pieces by Howard Zinn and Jello Biafra? For the metalheads, how about some mathematically calculated chaos from the Creation is Crucifixion or The Dillinger Escape Plan? And that’s not all; there’s hip-hop from Mystic, acoustic emo from the Miracle of ‘86, and the “righteous babe” herself, Ani DiFranco. There are also numerous other activists and musicians who are just as radical and inspiring as these artists, promoting action instead of empty slogans. Need more convincing? For all you sex addicts out there, this CD climaxes, literally, with a fifteen-minute orgasm courtesy of a Ducky Doolittle. You owe it to yourself to support these DIYers and all the artists who have dedicated their livelihood to making this world a better place; it doesn’t get any punker than that. **JB**

**V/A “Symphony for Heartbreak: U.S. Pop Life Vol. 9 - Seattle/Portland” (Contact) CD-** Anything I say in this review is kind of wasted, as I am not the intended audience. Contact Records has been creating these indie rock compilations based around specific music scenes for some time now, with the intent of introducing Japan to all the U.S. indie rock they are missing out on. For me, it’s annoying that most of these songs are available elsewhere (the Love As Laughter track seems like the only one exclusive to this release); but seeing as most of these don’t have distribution in Japan, this could be seen as a jackpot. I must admit that as a compilation, this really works, with songs placed in such a way as to create a nice flow. I do find it odd, though, that some songs are strung together, making the CD track numbingly useless. Let’s recap: if you are from the U.S., this isn’t bad, but yr money could be spent wiser. If you are from Japan and are interested in the Pacific Northwest indie scene (Green Pajamas, Death Cab for Cutie, 764-Hero, Unbunny), this is definitely for you. **JM**

**V/A “No-Fi Trash” (Floppy Cow) CD-** This label is from Switzerland and most of the bands are not on the label. Most of the songs are album tracks (read- non-exclusive) from the likes of The Promise Ring, Lagwagon, Midtown, Sarge, Get Up Kids, Tugboat Annie, Hot Water Music, etc. What gives? I suppose this is a licensing deal, where FC got the rights to these songs for Switzerland and now gets distribution in the US by Suburban Home. Normally, Mr. Ross sends me Euro records that typically hold some new surprises from bands I’ve never heard of. Here, it’s mostly known US bands and smaller acts that don’t really promise much. It’s funny, didn’t K-Tel already put out an indie-rock sampler? Unless unreleased tracks by The Gamits, Useless ID, The Anniversary and The Latrines are tremendously necessary, the only reason I could waver for this comp is if you’ve never heard any



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of these larger acts before. That said, this is a mixtape that I won't be copying over. **dup**

## VIA "Contaminated 3.0" (Relapse) CD- I

feel like Archie Bell at the beginning of part 2 of "Tighten Up"; "... Here we go again!". More, much more to sample from one of the best metal labels there is. Two discs worth of well-publicized acts like Nile, Benumb, The Dillinger Escape Plan and well known noise merchants like Brutal Truth (Danny Lilker rides again!), Anal Cunt, Neurosis and Today Is The Day. Shit, we even got some of the 70's-style garage metal like Nebula and Bongzilla. A rather broad grouping of old and new label material but a quality mix. If I want it metal, I want some variety and God almighty, give me some speed once in a while. Nearly 10 years of sluggish stomp metal from fat "hardcore kids" with visors has me wanting to grow my hair out and listen to Black Sabbath without Ozzy. There's plenty of growling as well as high end vox here, but it really doesn't get boring at any step of the way. Also, as according to the Global Label Sampler Edict of 1997, there are a handful of demo tracks and session outtakes to lure the most ardent fan. Most of the metal I'm listening to these days is the structural 80's stuff, but it's pretty damn clear who's making the right noise these days. Also notable- Coalesce, Amorphis, Luddite Clone, Unsane, Deceased, Agoraphobic Nosebleed, Mortician. Yes kids, thrash is back and your arms should be wide open. **dup**

## VIA "Another Year on the Streets" (Vagrant) CD- Vagrant, you sure have come a long way.

I remember the days where this label's claim to fame was the live Face to Face 10" that claimed to be "mailorder only," but was at every record store in my town. But nowadays, Face to Face is one of the weakest bands on the Vagrant roster, having snapped acts like the Alkaline Trio, Rocket From the Crypt, Saves the Day, and most recently, Hey Mercedes. This comp is chock full of unreleased material from 12 Vagrant artists. The songs by my guilty pleasure, Saves the Day, are just as good if not better than the material on their last full-length, "Don't Change Who You Are," and it's stupefying why they haven't been included on an album yet. Other standouts include Rocket From the Crypt, Automatic 7 (AKA Soul Distortion v2.0), and The Gotohells. The only really weak act on this comp are Vagrant's shining stars, The Get Up Kids. Their first song, an alternate version of "I'm A Loner Dottie, A Rebel..." is the third version of the song I've heard (it was first released on the Postmarked Stamps comp and a *another* version was released on "Something to Write Home About.") But that's nothing compared to their other song, "Beer For Breakfast," which I'm hoping is some kind of joke, albeit an unfunny one. For this track, the Get Up Kids abandon their lush emo soundscapes for what can only be described as a really bad Descendents rip-off propelled by the lyrics, "All I want to do is drink beer for breakfast. All I want to eat is them barbecue chips." Since when are Barbecue chips emo? Aside from the Frito Lay kids, this is a good introduction to one of today's most up and coming indie labels who I'm guessing won't be releasing any more live recordings of Face to Face in the near future. **JB**

## VIA "Punch Drunk II" (TKO) CD- I said I'm not gonna start this review by swinging from the

nuts of TKO, so if you know streetpunk you know them already, and if you're new to that scene they're tough to miss. Neophytes and freshcuts will benefit from this, a new label sampler with 25 tracks of raw punk rock with little pretense. There's also a touch of ethnic folk/rebel songs, glam and reggae. Although it starts off with the impeccable Reducers S.F., it's important to note that this comp highlights the looser, wild style of this style of punk. There's plenty of trademark anthemic Oi here, but often played brashly and mixed high- not bad attributes, but obvious ones. Non-label guests in on the keg party include The Dropkick Murphys, The Generators, The Righteous, and Suburban Threat. Acts to remember here: The Beltones, Reducers S.F., Those Unknown, Templars, Generators, Terminus City, NJ's Niblick Henbane, and the almighty Cock Sparrer. So in other words, most of this is really good, and the rest of these bands are new enough to still develop nicely. All right then. **dup**

## VIA "The Worldwide Tribute To The Real Oi" (Triple Crown) CD- Reading the insert to this

disc was fun indeed- heartfelt paeans to the great early classics of the streetpunk/oi style- Cock Sparrer, 4 Skins, Business, Blitz, Sham 69, Slaughter & The Dogs, etc., etc. This idea can't be taken too seriously- the original tracks are gospel to many, blueprints of a near perfect music. Each band takes on two tracks, from lesser-known compilation tracks to cornerstone anthems. The choice of some of the bands certainly spells trouble; the timeless melodies of the originals are likely to be mauled by most of today's heavier-than-the-next hardcore outfits. But there are some very nice surprises here- the truly remarkable development of Awkward Thought ("Victims" & "GLC"), new-to-me Discipline ("Running Riot" & "Generation Of Scars"), Kill Your Idols ("Banned From The Pubs" & "Work Together"), and ancient Troy NY hardcore act Stigmata ("Riot" & "Violence"). Blood For Blood, Dropkick Murphys and Oxymoron are all excellent as expected with the style and topical material. Agnostic Front was obviously influenced by early Oi, but are too stylistically defined to adapt to the style. In other words, the voice of Roger Miret can't compare to Colin McFall or Micky Fitz. The same goes for Madball, who actually re-write "Violence In Our Minds" but pull off a solid "Blind Justice" by their tour buddies The Business. Ryker's have always been too dark and death-metal for me, and their over-growling and double bass drumming spoil an otherwise decent "Never Surrender". Sick Of It All pull off passable versions of "Ripp Off" and "Working Class Kids" but they've been covering Oi songs for ages. The record is nicely capped off by a return favor by the Business, a cover of Iron Cross' "Crucified" (which itself, is best known when covered by AF). Pretty good overall. **dup**

**Vision of Disorder "From Bliss to Devastation" (TVT) CD-** It was my first trip to New York City. Accompanied by my dad, I scoured the record stores looking for a taste of this NYHC thing everyone was talking about. The consensus was that V.O.D.'s first EP, "Still" was the future of the scene, therefore that's what ended up in my Generation Records bag. While not the best band technically, "Still" dripped with raw emotion and just listening to it, I could picture hordes of hardcore kids in full kickboxing splendor. Flash forward to 2001: V.O.D. aren't a hardcore band anymore; they haven't been for years. After two records on Roadrunner, which hinted their evolution, they are now a full-fledged nu-metal band. Yeah, it sucks. V.O.D. are more melodic and experimental than the Papa Roach sound-alikes, but they aren't much better. Tim Williams sounds

eerily like Layne Staley, and the layers of flange and delay pedals can't cover up the fact that the music inherently generic. I don't dislike this album because it isn't a hardcore record. I dislike this album because V.O.D. are using the alibi of "doing something different in the hardcore scene" to justify doing exactly what every mainstream metal band is doing, and that's not any better. **JB**

## The Wanna-Bes (Panic Button/Lookout!) CD-

The world feels a little bit emptier now that Joey Ramone isn't around, but there's some consolation in bands like the Wanna-Bes, who play like post-punk never happened, like there's nothing in the world better than being 17 and sniffing glue in your parents basement while listening to rock and roll. Of course their lyrics aren't genius, but as with any Ben Weasel-related project, what did you expect, a treatise on Sartre? No, the Wanna-Bes prefer to keep their music fun, simple, and stupid -- almost willfully stupid. But the Ramones pretended to be stupid, too, so I mean it as a compliment. **DF**

## Waterdown "Drawasmilingface" (Two Friends) CDep- What, is it '95 again or did I

miss something? I thought thick-neck hardcore with start-stop guitars, middle of the road tempos (not too fast, not too slow, just right/boring), and a mix between growled and sung vocals went out with Menudo.... There's even an emocore side to this that makes me want to cringe even more. This reminds me of seriously Waterdown-ed (sorry, too perfect) Boys Sets Fire, which is probably what they were aiming for in order to get those all-important market points. This is seriously horrendous and should not have been allowed out of Germany. **JM**

## The Weakerthans "Watermark" (Sub City) CD-

The Weakerthans have been receiving a lot of attention as of late, and for once the hype machine may have picked a winner. While the title track of this album was on their last full-length, "Left and Leaving," this version contains a CD-ROM version of its music video, which is actually more a work of art than a marketing tool. Picture this: You computer screen cut up in 30 small boxes, while the tiny images change from live shots, to landscapes, to people's faces so quickly that if you blink you're guaranteed to miss something vital. Finally, a punk band has learned that no one wants to see videos of crappy live footage recorded on their parents' camcorder. As a bonus, this also includes live coffee shop versions of the previously released songs, "Illustrated Bible Stories for Children," and "The Last Last One." Even if you've heard these songs before, the stripped-down instrumentation combined with John Samson's melancholy musings add a new element of honesty to the songs, which is worth the cover price alone. I'm proud to say that Samson has outgrown the ex-Propagandhi label and officially established himself as a shining new songwriter in the punk community. Kudos to you, Mr. Samson. **JB**

## Where Fear and Weapons Meet "Unstoppable" (Triple Crown) CD-

For anyone keeping score, I really have liked the last two CDs by this band, so I was looking forward to this disc. And while I was a little put off by the more punk-influenced first track, the band then swung back into their old game: straight-up no-frills hardcore. Not only that, but as always, it's done right, with no sign of lame tough guy attitude yet plenty of intensity to keep things interesting. As always, my only complaint would be that it is too

short (7 songs in 15 minutes) and I'm left wanting more. Wait, I guess that's a good thing. This band has yet to let me down and they certainly did not start with this release. **JM**

## The Winter Blanket "Hopeless Lullaby" (Plow City) CD-

Quiet, pretty music that starts minimal and builds up, with male/female harmonies. First thought: "It's amazing how much this sounds like Low." Next, discovery: "Oh, Low's Alan Sparhawk produced, recorded, and plays on this record." Lastly, a realization: This isn't as good as Low. **AT**

## Yesterday's Kids "Everything Used to be Better" (Panic Button/Lookout!) CD-

You know what? I'm sick of working on reviews myself, so I'm going to phrase this review as a multiple-choice question, SAT style, and let you do some of the hard work for once in your goddamn lifetime, oh beloved reader. So here goes: the Yesterday's Kids new album is being jointly released by Lookout! and Ben Weasel's Panic Button. It has oodles of harmonic backing vocals and "na-na-nas." It combines the musical genres of pop and punk rock. Given this information, do you think Yesterday's Kids most closely resemble: A) lo-fi rockabilly with an electronic beat, B) a hybrid of world-music rhythms and gangsta rap, C) acoustic thrash metal, or D) pop punk? Please choose one. **DF**

## Zero Zero "AM Gold" (Jade Tree) CD-

I've said it once and I'll say it again: Jade Tree has managed to turn the talent of two bands into a very very successful and diverse roster. Take Lifetime and Cap'n Jazz and you get the monumentally successful Promise Ring, Joan of Arc, Owls, Kid Dynamite, and now Zero Zero. Born from the ashes of Lifetime, Dave and Ari teamed up with newcomer, Tannis, to craft a sound that sounds absolutely nothing at all like Lifetime. Rather, this band brings together some of the dancier elements of Stereolab. Hell, I think this is one of the few times when a direct comparison is totally out of my reach. Maybe that's because I was quite unprepared for what I heard when I popped this in my stereo. I can say it's very good, it has been in my stereo for a month, and that anyone who craves the harder side of Lifetime (as well as the more aggressive side of indie-rock in general) will probably not like this. However, if you think Portishead is a bit too slow and somber for your taste, and that simple keyboard melodies over drum-machine rhythms sounds like something Snapcase never tried but you always wish they had, then I seriously recommend you check this out. **RS**



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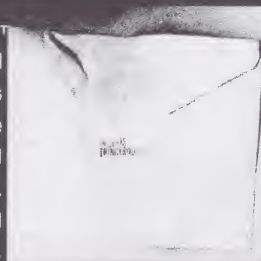
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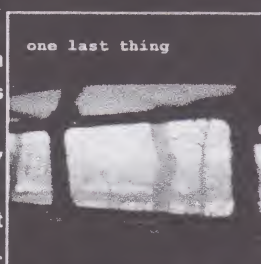
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